After the Tel Aviv Bombing MARTIN PERETZ, YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

THE NEW REPUBLIC

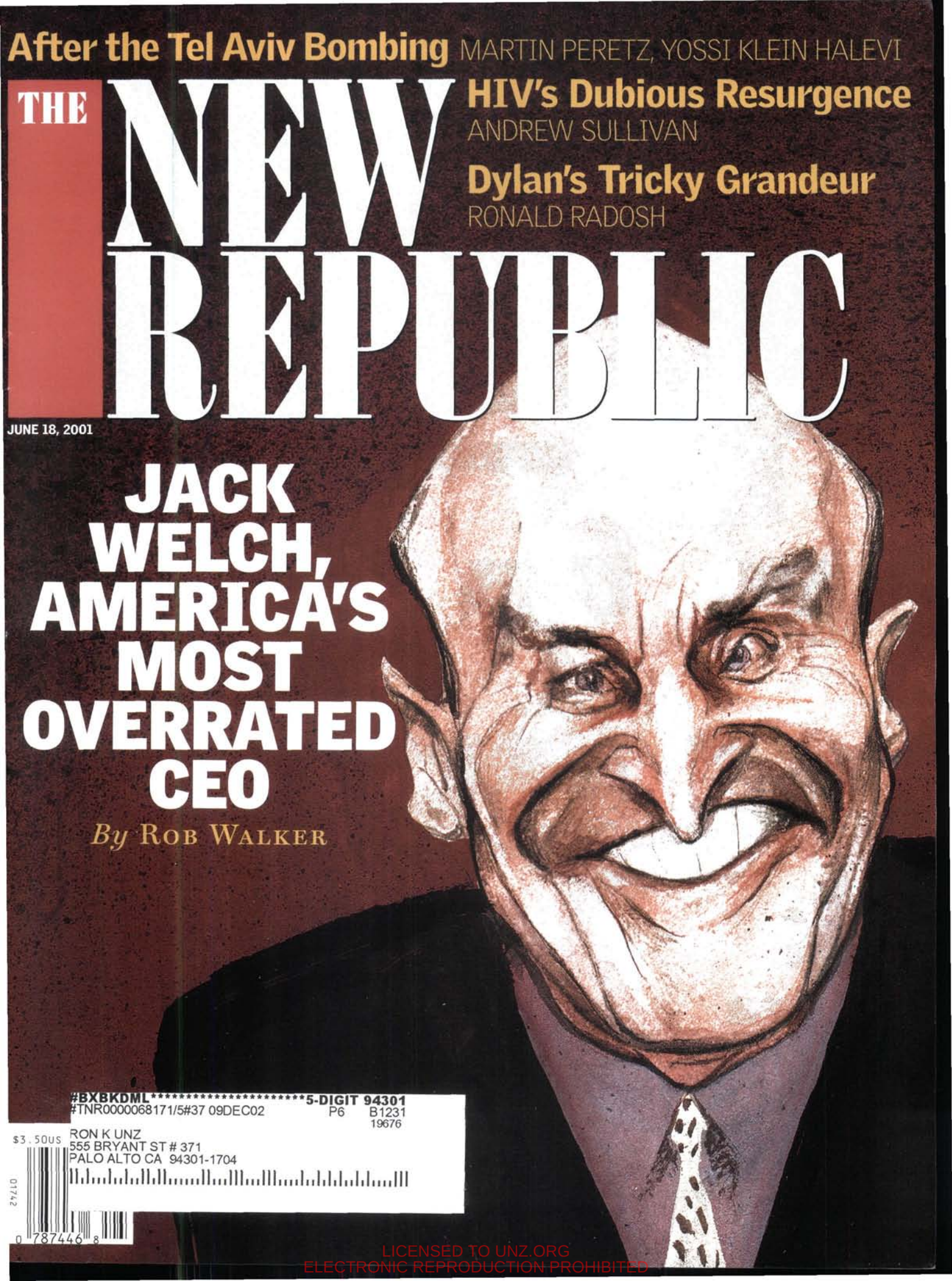
HIV's Dubious Resurgence
ANDREW SULLIVAN

Dylan's Tricky Grandeur
RONALD RADOSH

JUNE 18, 2001

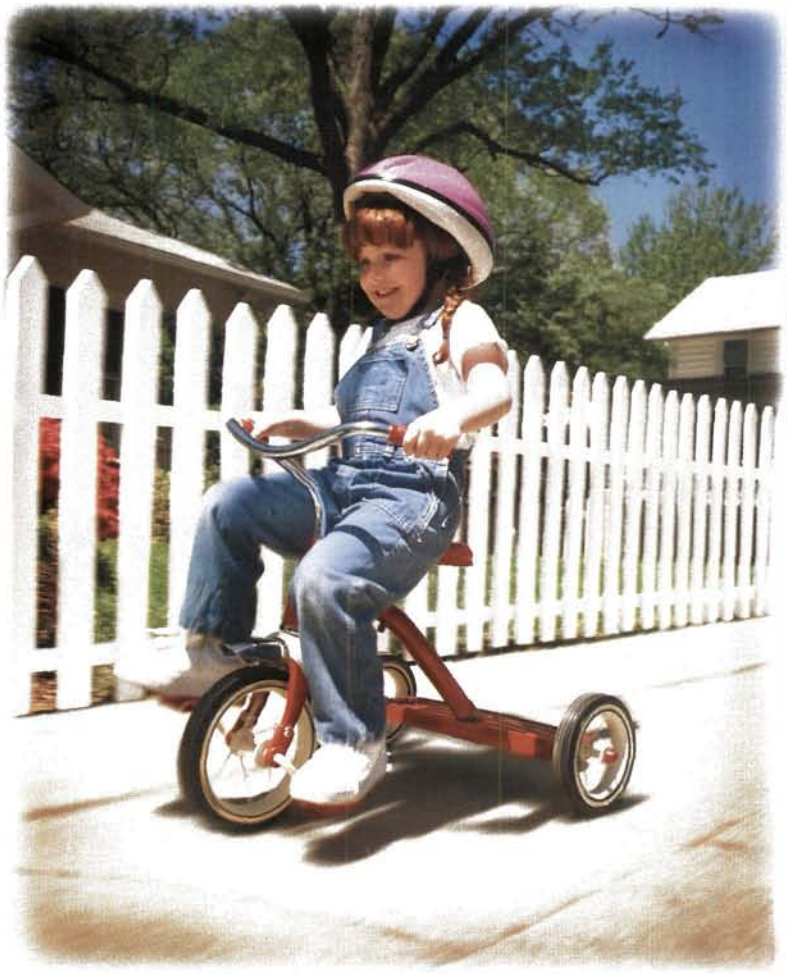
JACK WELCH, AMERICA'S MOST OVERRATED CEO

By ROB WALKER



#BXBKDML********** 5-DIGIT 94301
#TNR0000068171/5#37 09DEC02 P6 B1231
19676
RON K UNZ
555 BRYANT ST # 371
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704
$3.50US
01742
0 787446 8

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



©2001. Fannie Mae. All rights reserved. The house logo is a registered mark of Fannie Mae.

Fannie Mae makes affordable mortgage funds available to large and small lenders across America.

Which means the American Dream is available in everyone's hometown.

The Sandovals' dream was a split-level home in Spring, Texas. For the Pearsons, it was a bungalow in Cary, North Carolina. At Fannie Mae, we know the American Dream comes in all shapes and sizes and stretches across large cities and small towns.

FannieMae
www.fanniemae.com

Which is why we make sure lenders of all sizes, from the largest to the smallest, have access to a full range of mortgage products and technology.

For example, our e-commerce strategies allow community banks to offer their customers the full range of Fannie Mae mortgage options, which helps more Americans get into homes of their own.

So no matter which way you turn, Fannie Mae is helping make sure that more families have more choices through lenders both large and small. Which keeps the American Dream thriving in hometowns all across the country.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
JUNE 18, 2001
ISSUE 4,509

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND CHAIRMAN
MARTIN PERETZ

EDITOR
PETER BEINART
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Executive Editor
CHRISTOPHER ORR
Senior Editors
JONATHAN CHAIT, JONATHAN COHN, MICHELLE COTTLE, GREGG EASTERBROOK, JOHN B. JUDIS, LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN, ANDREW SULLIVAN, JAMES WOOD
Legal Affairs JEFFREY ROSEN
Managing Editor SARAH BLUSTAIN
Assistant Managing Editor KATIE ISENBERG
Films: STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater: ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Poetry: CHARLES WRIGHT
Art: JED PERL
Architecture: MARTIN FILLER
Dance: MINDY ALOFF
The New Republic Online
MARTIN EDLUND, ARI GERSEN, BRIAN GROH, DANIEL HALPERN, JEREMY MCCARTER, LEILA NESSON
New Republic Books (BASIC BOOKS)
JOHN DONATICH
Contributing Editors
FOUAD AJAMI, AKHIL REED AMAR, PETER BERKOWITZ, ELIOT A. COHEN, JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, NATHAN GLAZER, ANTHONY GRAFTON, DAVID GRANN, YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI, ANN HULBERT, TONY JUDT, ROBERT KAGAN, MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, GLENN C. LOURY, MATTHEW MILLER, SHERWIN B. NULAND, DAVID RIEFF, MICHAEL J. SANDEL, MAGGIE SCARF, LEE SIEGEL, RONALD STEEL, CASS R. SUNSTEIN, MARGARET TALBOT, E.V. THAW, MICHAEL WALZER, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, ROBERT WRIGHT
Contributing Artists
JACK COUGHLIN, VINT LAWRENCE, DAVID SCHORR, TOM TOLES
Special Correspondent ANNA HUSARSKA
Associate Editors
MICHAEL CROWLEY, FRANKLIN FOER, RYAN LIZZA, JASON ZENGERLE
Associate Literary Editor RUTH FRANKLIN
Consulting Art Director JONATHAN HOUSTON
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Information-Technology and Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE
Production Manager HENRY RIGGS
Assistant Editors
AMANDA FAZZONE, NOAM SCHEIBER, BENJAMIN SOSKIS, SARAH WILDMAN
Assistant to the Editor ELI KINTISCH
Assistant Literary Editor JUSTIN DRIVER
Assistant Poetry Editor MELANIE REHAK
Reporter-Researchers
JOSHUA CHAFETZ, ANAND GIRIDHARADAS, CARYN TAMBER

President
ANDREW MCCOLOUGH
Publisher
STEPHANIE SANDBERG
General Manager
ANNETTE POCICA

ADVERTISING SALES AND MARKETING
Director of Advertising, West
JOAN STAPLETON TOOLEY
Director of Advertising, Washington
NICHOLAS COSTON
Director of Advertising, New York
ELLEN JARVIS
Director of Advertising, New York
DAVID NUDO
Marketing Director SARA ZYSKOWSKI
Associate Advertising Manager ANN ROSSAKI

CONSUMER MARKETING
Consumer Marketing Manager
HOPE ROBERTS
Assistant Consumer Marketing Manager
KELLY SPRING

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
Controller GWYNETH ASDORIAN
Accounting Assistant VANESSA WILSON
Accounts Payable Coordinator ALITIA NEBLETT
Business Assistant SARA DEGRAEVE
Receptionist LISA DUNHAM

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** If race is skin-deep, so is affirmative action, &c.

6 **ANDREW SULLIVAN** TRB: RECOUNT On AIDS, the papers choose hype over science.

9 **THE EDITORS** COUP OF NONE Has Trent Lott lost his mind?

10 **NOTEBOOK** Words of wisdom for the Bush twins from Vladimir Zhirinovsky, &c.

12 **JEFFREY ROSEN** BENCH PRESS How to tell the good Bush judges from the bad.

14 **MICHELLE COTTLE** REFORM SCHOOL Jeffords saves special ed. Unfortunately.

16 **YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI** TEL AVIV DISPATCH: ADMISSION TICKET Russians into Israelis.

18 **MICHAEL RUBIN** SULAYMANIYAH DISPATCH: FOOD FIGHT The truth about sanctions.

19 **FRANKLIN FOER** ISLE OF BLIGHT The worst Bush nominee yet.

22 **ROB WALKER** OVERVALUED Jack Welch is often called the greatest corporate leader of the century. His fans point to GE's tremendous success under his watch. But GE was tremendously successful under his predecessors as well. What's new isn't Jack Welch's genius; it's the idea of the CEO as superhero.

26 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: LOOKING BACK *Pearl Harbor* brings us the bangs of World War II; *Divided We Fall* focuses on its human tragedies.

28 **MINDY ALOFF** ON DANCE: SPITBALLS AT EUCLID In *The Beethoven Seventh* and *The Brahms/Haydn Variations*, Twyla Tharp continues her masterful investigations of classical form.

31 **JAMES WOOD** CLEARANCES *Island: The Complete Stories* by Alistair MacLeod

35 **PAULA FREDRIKSEN** LAMBS INTO LIONS *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* by H. A. Drake

39 **RONALD RADOSH** TAKE WHAT YOU NEED *Positively 4th Street: The Life and Times of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Mimi Baez Fariña, and Richard Fariña* by David Hajdu; *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan* by Howard Sounes

44 **JON LOOMIS** POEM *In Circe's Garden*

46 **MARTIN PERETZ** CAMBRIDGE DIARIST: EXCESS

On the Cover : Illustration by STEVE BRODNER
On the Web : www.thenewrepublic.com

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 224, Number 25, Issue 4,509, June 18, 2001. (Printed in the United States on June 6, 2001.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated January 1 & 8, April 9 & 16, July 9 & 16, August 27 & September 3, 2001 and December 31, 2001 & January 7, 2002) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Ann Rossaki at (202) 331-7494 or our NY sales office at (212) 924-8700. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 2001 by The New Republic, Inc.** **(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Uncommon

TO THE EDITORS:

While it was encouraging to see someone thinking critically about the recent eruption of interest in the "menace of bullies," Benjamin Soskis sorely misses the point ("Bully Pulpit," May 14). In recent months the media, researchers, and state legislatures have seized on bullying as the proximate cause of horrific school shootings across the country. Frankly, most of the interesting people I know have, at some point in their lives, been cruelly and mercilessly mocked and humiliated. Bullying is perennial and hasn't historically provided a pretext for mass murder. So what has changed? The last few decades have seen the rise of an artificial society in which children grow up without community interaction—bereft of experience with common spaces other than shopping malls, religion besides megachurches, and neighborhoods other than "planned communities." The idea of a community—a small group of people whose lives are intertwined and who abide by common principles, interacting socially, culturally, and intellectually every day—has dissolved. The word itself has been stretched beyond belief (consider, for example, the "business community" and the "advertising community"). Bullying is beside the point. When real communities evaporate in all but rhetoric, violence abounds.

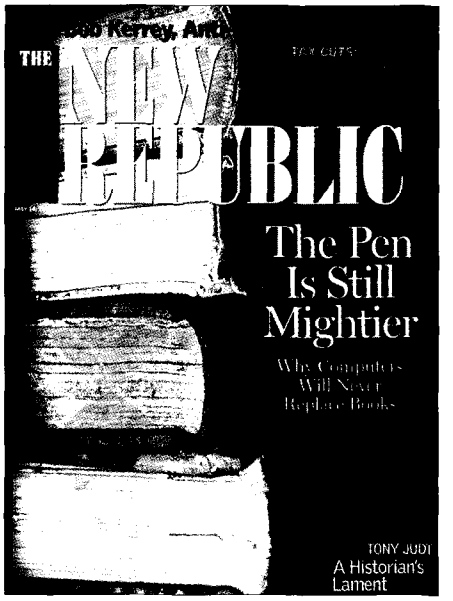
SETH BROWN
New York, New York

Camouflage

TO THE EDITORS:

We can hope that few are in favor of killing innocent women and children, but, as with many articles about the Vietnam War, yours about Bob Kerrey's dilemma ("Anti-Hero," May 14) does not even mention the key problem of the war: With few exceptions, the enemy did not wear uniforms. As a result, they could deliberately mingle with the civilian population. (They also used women and children in sneak attacks on Americans.) This had two main effects: We could not readily recognize the enemy, and it made the entire civilian population suspect.

In World War II, we were forcefully instructed that enemies caught out of uniform could be executed on the spot. As a result, few Germans attempted to blend in with the civilian population. In Vietnam, however, we accepted the enemy's lack of uniform and attempted the impossible task of separating the "soldier" from the harmless civilian. Inevitable mistakes were made, but this was far more the fault



of the North Vietnamese for deliberately creating the situation than of the American troops who were trying desperately to deal with it. And it was also far less the fault of the American troops than of the American government and people who accepted the North Vietnamese "rules" of war. We should regret all mistaken deaths, but it is not weird that they happened or that some of us think the moral scandal devolves mostly on the North Vietnamese.

RICHARD BLAKE
East Falmouth, Massachusetts

Racial profiles

TO THE EDITORS:

It is ironic that Jeffrey Rosen justifies racial discrimination in university admissions by pointing to how "diversity" enriched his students' discussion of racial profiling ("Without Merit," May 14). He quotes an African American student's condemnation of the latter practice, but race-based admissions rely on stereotypes too. Sure, there may be correlations between race and holding some views, just as there are between race and crime. But the costs of institutionalized discrimination overwhelm any benefits.

Equally unsatisfactory is Rosen's argument that, because university officials would rather lower standards across the board to ensure a predetermined racial mix than hold everyone to a single high standard, we are therefore better off letting them use different standards—one for whites and Asians, another for blacks, and maybe a third for Hispanics. Such stubbornness and the willingness to destroy the system rather than change it were not acceptable excuses during the post-*Brown* v. *Board of Education* era of massive resistance, and they should not be accepted now either.

Rosen concludes that judges ought to defer to professorial judgment regarding the value of diversity, yet elsewhere he concedes (twice) that what really drives academic decision-making is not educational considerations but political pressure to meet racial and ethnic quotas. I've taught at a law school, too, and recall no instance where skin color, rather than intelligence and diligence, determined the value of a student's classroom contributions.

ROGER CLEGG
General Counsel
Center for Equal Opportunity
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

Jeffrey Rosen's reaction to a discussion in his criminal-procedure class places uncomfortable focus on the politically correct reaction that assumes racial profiling when dealing with the police. His African American student clearly accepts the function of the police in enforcing traffic regulations. The student's negative reaction is to what follows that traffic stop, in which "[y]ou have to ... [show] that you're subordinate" to the officer.

I was recently stopped by a young, white police officer in a small town in central Michigan. Noting my out-of-state license, he queried me arrogantly: "Don't you have speed limits in Ohio?" When I didn't respond with alacrity, he confidently pressed: "I am sorry, sir, I didn't hear your answer." It was, as the African American student testified, "incredibly degrading."

As I am white and 75 years old, I cannot assume this was racial profiling. I could assume that it was a particularly pernicious form of age harassment. My disagreeable assumption, however, is that some members of the police use their badge to establish a position of power. Racial profiling exists: David Harris and others have utilized appropriate study techniques pointing to the practice and its societal consequences. But this does not give us license to define every distasteful experience with a police officer as racial profiling.

ALAN MAYOR SOKOBIN
Lecturer in Law and
Associate Professor of History
University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio

TO THE EDITORS:

Jeffrey Rosen quotes an African American student as saying, with regard to racial profiling, "You have to do this step-'n'-fetch-it routine, showing that you're subordinate to the officer, to make sure he

continued on page 45

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Science from sea to shining sea

Children across the country have new options for combining G-rated entertainment with science education. Nationwide, more than 100 hands-on science museums and technology centers are giving our young people — in fact, people of all ages — a better understanding of science and technology than previous generations have ever experienced. From Baltimore's Maryland Science Center to The Science Place in Dallas, the long-established Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago to the Children's Discovery Museum in San Jose, a more science-savvy citizenry is learning for itself how things — and the world — work.

It's a positive trend that we at Exxon-Mobil are proud to support. Schools remain the most important places where interest and skill in science-related subjects must be nurtured. But with technology so important in so many areas of life, it's essential that other institutions play a part in encouraging children to develop a strong interest in science, mathematics and engineering.

That's why in 1988 we chose to be one of the initial investors in Liberty Science Center (LSC) in Jersey City, New Jersey. The financial support that we and many others have provided has fostered the growth of LSC programs. The museum now includes many hands-on and interactive exhibits, including a one-of-a-kind exhibit called E-Quest: Exploring Earth's Energy. This learning experience takes visitors on a fascinating journey through the five major sources of the earth's energy and demonstrates the extraordinary ways humans have explored for and harnessed energy sources. The exhibit exemplifies how science centers are finding new approaches to making science more accessible to young people.

LSC² E=m
Liberty Science Center

But what museums such as Liberty Science Center ultimately provide — a better understanding of science and technology — is not important just for children.

Health sciences help each of us decide what to eat and how to live healthier lives. Greater familiarity with scientific and technological concepts can provide some insight into what companies might be better investments for our savings, or what career paths we should suggest for our children. Many public issues and even some court cases depend on scientific analysis and technological developments. Knowledge of the scientific process can help us make informed and fair decisions in the voting booth and in the jury box.

So we heartily recommend adding a science museum or technology center to your weekend schedule, if you live near one, or to your itinerary on any trip where you'd like to entertain the kids and yourself, and learn something to boot. You'll be glad you did.

ExxonMobil™

To find out more about the many science and technology museums across the continent and around the world, log on to http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~mwm/sci.html

Please visit our Web site at www.exxonmobil.com

© 2001 Exxon Mobil Corporation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Recount

THE HEADLINES LAST week were startling. The front pages of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* announced truly dramatic data about the rise of HIV infection among young gay men in the United States. The news for young black gay men was particularly nightmarish: One in three are now infected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a statistic repeated by Lawrence K. Altman, *The New York Times*' AIDS reporter. Worse, the infection rate in this subpopulation is roughly 15 percent per year. In Altman's words: "The findings mean that for every 100 young black gay men who were not infected at the beginning of the year, nearly 15 would be infected by the end of the year." Extrapolating from that, almost every black gay man in America could have HIV within a few years.

Sound familiar? At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, similar studies supposedly proved that AIDS would soon engulf everyone. In 1987 Oprah Winfrey famously predicted that one-fifth of all *heterosexuals* would die of AIDS by 1990. The same year, *U.S. News & World Report* suggested that up to four million Americans were already infected. Even as new treatments became available in the mid-'90s, the AIDS establishment's line was that nothing much had changed, that the epidemic was about to explode again, that the drugs would fail soon. Every one of these pronouncements has proved wrong. AIDS cases in America peaked in 1993 and have been declining ever since. Last year's solid statistics from the CDC on AIDS diagnoses and AIDS deaths show the lowest levels in more than a decade.

But is a second wave upon us? One answer lies in the very report that generated the hysterical headlines. Quietly, several respected journalists on HIV—Paul Varnell of the *Chicago Free Press*, Bob Roehr of the *Bay Area Reporter*, and freelance troublemaker Michael Petrelis—have done what other journalists haven't: They've actually looked skeptically at the CDC's small print. And it's not a pretty sight.

To begin with, the study on which last week's headlines rest is not new. It's a continuation of the same study released last February to similar headlines—subjected, in Altman's words, to "a different analysis." That analysis subjects bloodwork to a new test to see how recently the infection occurred. Researchers went back over their blood samples to see whether the infections were new or old—and they found striking evidence of recent infections. Hence the "new" data. So how many cases were used to draw this conclusion? Of 2,942 cases, gleaned from six cities over several years, a grand total of 38. Why not more? Linda Valleroy, the CDC scientist who led the study, told reporters it was simply incomplete. Researchers needed more time to reach definitive results. So why release an incomplete report based on a tiny number of cases? Could it be that, with the twentieth anniversary of AIDS upon us, the CDC wanted to use the occasion to make headlines? And could it be that the vast array of AIDS organizations that need the specter of a resurgent epidemic to keep the dollars flowing were only too glad to fuel the fire?

To be fair to Valleroy, she said that she "must underline that the sample size of African Americans is small and that these findings are preliminary. However, we believe these data are of critical public health importance and feel it is urgent to release them now." But how do we know the statistics are of critical public health importance unless we know what the statistics actually are? Doesn't this get science and hype exactly the wrong way around?

Take a simple point. How many black gay men were in the total sample that gave us the now-famous statistic that one-third of all black gay men are infected with HIV? Out of almost 3,000 cases, 408 were black, and 122 of them were HIV-positive. If you average that number over the six cities surveyed, you find that the data on which Valleroy based her belief that we have "explosive incidence rates" among black men who have sex with men is based on about 20 HIV-positive men in each city surveyed. Twenty. Moreover, of the 38 cases showing "new infections," as Roehr has noticed, no data were given on the racial breakdown. For all we know—for all any reporter knows—there could be as few as two or even one black man in the sample of 38. "SWIFT RISE SEEN IN H.I.V. CASES FOR GAY BLACKS" is a headline looking for a story. The mainstream media didn't find the story because the story, at least in this study, doesn't exist.

So what do we know? We know—again, according to the CDC—that annual HIV infections in the United States have been stable at 40,000 per year for several years, while AIDS cases and AIDS deaths are at an all-time low. How does this square with zooming rates for young gay men and black gay men, huge jumps in HIV infection among women, and on and on, also asserted by the CDC? When pressed by reporters asking whether the 40,000 infections per year should now be revised upward, Helene Gayle, who runs HIV programs at the CDC, replied, "It's complicated.... We are looking at developing systems that will give us more precise numbers." But how complicated is it? How can infection rates be both stable and explosive? Is transmission up or down or stable? Right now, the CDC is telling us all three.

This is not to say there is no such rise in HIV infections. It is simply to say we don't know. If you think about it, a rise is statistically likely. In the old days, about the same number of people contracted HIV each year as died of AIDS, creating a stable pool of HIV-positive people in the population. With HIV now a manageable, chronic disease, and with AIDS diagnoses and deaths at all-time lows, the HIV-positive population keeps growing. Even if safer-sex prevention is proving successful, the chances of any random HIV-negative person meeting an HIV-positive person is simply higher than it once was, and accidents happen. You'd expect a slow trend upward. So, in fact, the steady rate of HIV infections since 1992—assuming 40,000 per year is right—suggests not a decrease in safe sex but an increase. Again, we don't know for sure—but it is just as plausible a reading of the CDC's data as the one it has offered.

I do not mean to impugn the CDC. It does a difficult job honorably. Without mandatory HIV reporting, any attempt to find HIV transmission rates from nonrandom samples of gay men recruited in bars and STD clinics is very hazardous. Black men who have sex with men but don't identify themselves as "gay" are particularly hard to find—which makes statistics about them even more dubious. In this report—again, in the small print—the margin of error is enormous for a statistic of a 15 percent annual infection rate among black gay men. The real infection rate could be anywhere from 7.9 to 27.1 percent—from a pool of a mere 400 people recruited far from randomly. Sorry, but that's not worth a banner headline. Which is not to say it should be dismissed. We need more data, more analysis, more research—and less hysterical journalism. Please.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Without Freddie Mac, you'd pay $12,000 more for a mortgage.

Assuming you could get one.

What if your chances of getting a mortgage depended on how much your neighbors had in savings?

Don't laugh. That's how the home financing system used to work. Before 1970, local savings deposits were the chief source of mortgage funds. If times were good, your chances were excellent. And if times were bad?

That's when Congress decided a more reliable source of mortgage money was needed. And Freddie Mac was born.

We were charged with creating a stable and growing supply of low-cost mortgage money. A supply that depends more on institutional investors than individual savers.

Today that supply tops $4 trillion. A supply so stable, it withstood the worldwide credit crunch of 1998 and the unprecedented demand for mortgages the same year. And so big, it's driven down the price of conventional mortgages by half a percentage point. Saving the average homeowner with a $100,000 mortgage about $12,000 in interest.

It's made getting a mortgage so easy and affordable that more people can own homes now than ever before.

No matter how much their neighbors have in savings.

Freddie Mac

We Open Doors®

©2000 Freddie Mac

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There are many ways to measure our commitment. Here is just one—

40,000 researchers

We're America's pharmaceutical companies. There are a lot of ways you can measure our commitment.

Today, 40,000 researchers form the backbone of America's pharmaceutical industry — searching for cures ... lengthening lives ... restoring health ... offering hope.

There are many ways to measure our commitment.

It takes a lot of committed people 40,000 researchers when breakthroughs are your business.

PhRMA

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America

Leading the Way in the Search for Cures

www.phrma.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coup of None

A particularly hackneyed bit of political commentary, promulgated during the Florida recount, held that victory would be a poisoned chalice. The winner, according to this theory, would suffer the wrath of a losing party convinced that democracy and fairness had been abrogated. The prediction has turned out to be half-right. Washington is indeed rife with angry accusations that a political putsch overturned the clear will of the majority. The strange thing is that most of this outrage stems not from the election's losers but from its winners.

The precipitating cause of the outrage, of course, is the defection of Jim Jeffords from the Republican Party. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page describes the Senate's flip as "a beltway coup" and "[t]he overturning of the U.S. government." *The Washington Times* accuses Jeffords of a "coup," a "stark act of astonishing betrayal," and "a sneak attack of Pearl Harbor proportions." Majority Leader cum Minority Leader Trent Lott endorsed this view in a memorandum to "Republican opinion leaders" last weekend. Jeffords's switch, he argued, "was 'a coup of one' that subverted the will of the American voters who elected a Republican majority. Neither the American people, not even the people of Vermont, voted to put the Democrats in control of the Senate." Hence, he concluded, the Democrats' "control of the Senate lacks the moral authority of a mandate from the voters."

For all this fury, it's not easy to identify the precise democratic principle conservatives believe has been violated. Is it wrong for a state's voters to elect a Republican and then be represented by an independent? That's a tricky argument for conservatives to make given that, when Richard Shelby and Ben Nighthorse Campbell switched from the Democratic Party to the GOP in the middle of their terms, those same conservatives evinced a notable lack of outrage. The *Journal* insists any comparison between those cases and Jeffords's is "entirely phony" because only Jeffords "cause[d] control of the Senate to pass to the other party." So we are left with the principle that party-switching is perfectly fine—noble, even—unless it happens to occur in an evenly balanced chamber, in which case it represents a sinister anti-democratic plot.

The logical fulcrum upon which this precarious distinction rests is the notion that the American electorate chose a Republican Senate. But divining this act of popular will isn't easy either. When voters went to the polls last November, only their state's Senate candidates were on the ballot; they had no direct way to express their views on which party should have overall control. And even if you could prove that voters were motivated primarily by the choice between Trent Lott and Tom Daschle, rather than the choice between the candidates running for Senate in their home state, last November's election hardly represents a mandate for GOP control. After all, voters threw four seats to the Democrats and wound up splitting the chamber evenly. Maybe Lott thinks the voters "decided" to make him majority leader by giving Dick Cheney the tie-breaking vote. The trouble with that theory, of course, is that more voters wanted the tie-breaking vote to be cast by Joe Lieberman.

Even if we somehow stipulate that the voters deliberately selected a GOP Senate last November, they clearly do not want one *now*. By a margin of 45 percent to 36 percent, according to a CNN/*Time* magazine poll conducted May 23 and May 24, Americans think "the country would be better off" under a Democratic Senate than a Republican one. An overwhelming majority of Jeffords's constituents approve of his decision and believe it is in the interests of Vermont. The idea that Democratic control of the Senate violates the public will is absurd.

Lott's concern for the will of the majority is especially rich given the results of the presidential election. It has been conclusively proved that Bush's victory in Florida depended on faulty voting equipment. But the thwarting of the public's preferences goes well beyond technical failure. A plurality of voters chose the Democratic nominee, and if you factor in Ralph Nader, a majority supported left-of-center candidates. Even Bush was forced to pledge his support for popular Democratic proposals such as prescription-drug coverage and HMO reform. A clear majority of Americans, then, voted for moderate-to-liberal reforms.

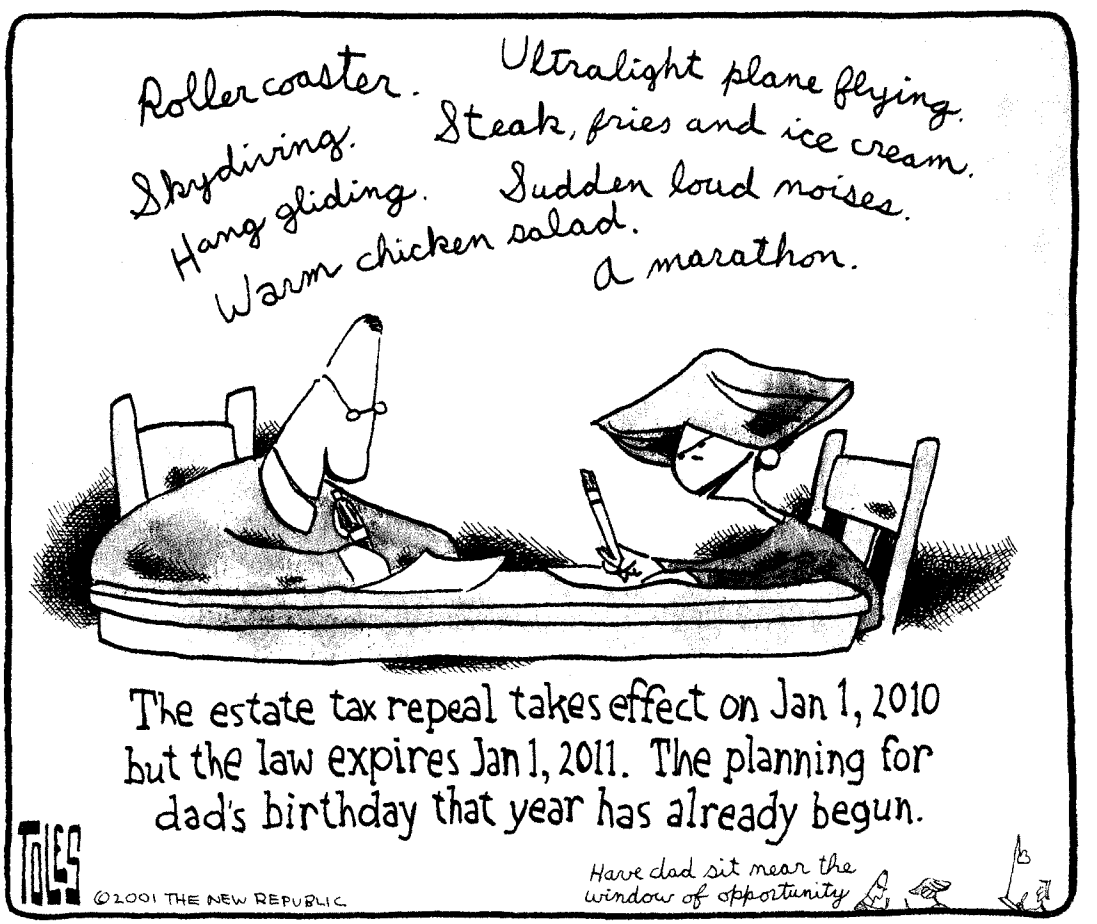
The Bush presidency has thwarted the will of the people by moving in an ideological direction of which the people clearly disapproved. "We have a moral obligation," one senator declared recently, "to restore the integrity of our democracy, to restore by the democratic process what was changed in the shadows of the back rooms in Washington." That senator was Trent Lott, and he had it exactly right. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

N O T E B O O K

SPEED (DIALING) KILLS: Good news for anyone worried about being run down by a reckless driver chatting away distractedly on a cell phone: According to a recent study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, cell phones actually rank pretty low on a list of driving distractions that contribute to traffic accidents. The top five are outside objects, adjusting the radio, other occupants (read: screaming kids), climate controls, and eating or drinking. Lucky timing, too: In May a bill was introduced in Congress that would cut federal funds to states that failed to outlaw the use of handheld cell phones while driving. Cell phone nuts (and companies) are now furiously pointing to the new survey and shrieking: Back off! As *USA Today* snarkily put it: "The leading culprit, in fact, is events *outside* the car. So, presumably the bigger risk isn't the driver who talks on a phone, but the other drivers who look at him and fume about it." Very amusing. Unfortunately, the new study—which appeared to refute a 1997 *New England Journal of Medicine* report showing that cell phone use increases the risk of auto accidents fourfold—has holes you could drive an SUV through. For starters, its findings are based on a review of some 30,000 accident reports filed between 1995 and 1999—even though cell phone use didn't really explode until 1998. The sheer difference in the number of folks with cell phones during that period (versus those with radios or kids or air conditioners or whatever) would naturally produce a massive gap. Also, the top distraction—outside objects—represents an absurdly large category, encompassing everything from sunlight to deer to other drivers drifting into your lane. Finally, the AAA report was based on information provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. But police accident reports in most cities and states do not include information on cell phone use—unless the driver volunteers the information. But even the author of the AAA study, Jane C. Stutts, acknowledges that those chatting at the time of a crash aren't likely to fess up. "People are not willing to report it," she told *The Washington Post*. So feel free to give dirty looks to those on-the-road chatterers. If they subsequently wreck, they'll be more than happy to blame your outside distraction.

WRONG ADDRESS: You'd think one of the few positive side effects of passing George W.'s tax cut (torturously named the Restoring Earnings to Lift Individuals and Empower Families—i.e., RELIEF—Act) would be an end to the grotesque misrepresentations that helped bring it to fruition. Sadly, you'd be wrong. Devoting his weekly radio address to the bill last weekend, Bush trumpeted "[s]ome other provisions of the tax bill [that] haven't received quite as much attention." One is a worthy measure making the child tax credit partially refundable, which means rebates for poor parents who pay no income tax. In fact, the provision did get plenty of attention—from the White House, which backed congressional Republican efforts to kill it. Bush also bragged about new tax breaks for retirement savings plans, though he didn't include them in his original proposal, and the provision apparently avoided expungement only at the last minute, when it became clear Senator Jim Jeffords's defection meant no further tax breaks would be possible this year. Which just goes to show that *some* tax cuts are popular enough to describe honestly—just not the upper-bracket giveaways at the center of the tax bill, which, strangely, Bush neglected to mention at all in his address.

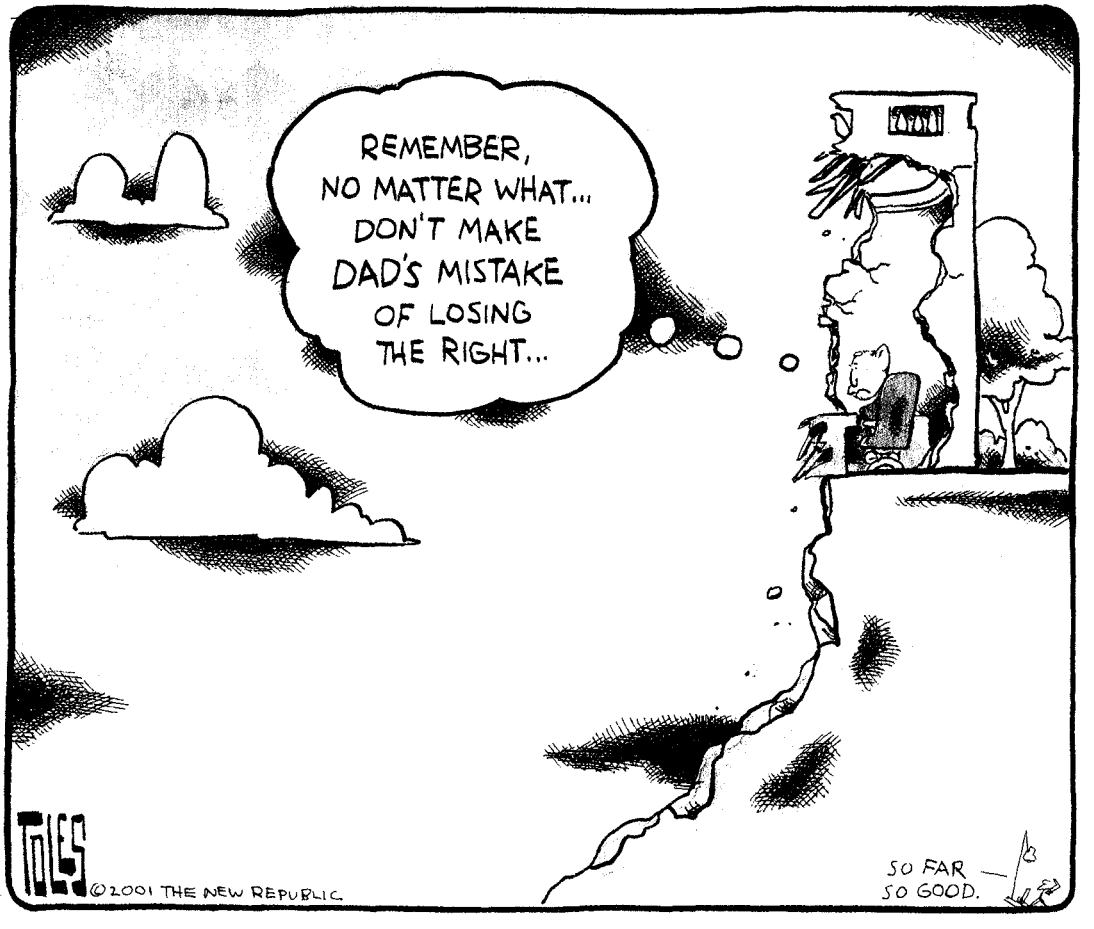

Roller coaster.
Ultralight plane flying.
Skydiving.
Steak, fries and ice cream.
Hang gliding.
Sudden loud noises.
Warm chicken salad.
a marathon.
The estate tax repeal takes effect on Jan 1, 2010 but the law expires Jan 1, 2011. The planning for dad's birthday that year has already begun.
TOLES
©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
Have dad sit near the window of opportunity

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EVEN WORSE, THEY BARBED-WIRED THE INFIELD: "I want to thank so very much Norm Mineta, secretary of, um, transportation, who is our first-base coach. When Norm was a little guy, he was a Little Leaguer—right before World War II. And on his way to an intern [*sic*] camp, one of the bad things that happened in American history, they took his bat away from him. But he's never forgotten the hope and promise of Little League and what it means for kids."—George W. Bush, presiding over T-ball on the White House's South Lawn, June 3

THE DOG ATE THEM: President Bush says his approach to Medicare reform will empower consumers: By giving senior citizens vouchers and then letting them choose among insurance plans, he says, every senior could pick the plan best-suited to his or her needs—thus promoting choice, competition, and, ultimately, efficiency. It's debatable whether the plan would really be better for seniors—if the vouchers are too meager, as they probably would be, many seniors would be forced to enroll in low-rent plans that would *limit* choices among doctors and treatments. But at least the administration's commitment to empowering consumers is genuine. Or is it? Earlier this week, Thomas Scully, the newly appointed head of the Health Care Financing Administration, said Medicare (which HCFA administers) would soon begin issuing report cards on hospitals, nursing homes, and physicians. The idea is to publicize data about staffing levels, credentials, and so on—the kind of pertinent consumer information that would allow seniors to make more informed choices about which insurance plan to use. "HCFA already collects a fairly substantial amount of data," Scully explained to *The Washington Post*, adding that he thought the agency would decide on a set of criteria "fairly quickly and start using it." But the very next day a HCFA representative issued a clarification. The agency, according to the Associated Press, has "no plans to use the data to rate providers or to release such information." Why the reversal? Scorecards are anathema to hospital and physician lobbyists, who worry they will be misinterpreted. It's a reasonable concern: Hospitals and doctors who take on the hardest cases inevitably have lower success rates, which might make their report cards look bad. But that can be fixed by tinkering with the criteria and providing more context for the data; it's no reason to abandon the scorecards altogether. Unless, of course, it's lobbyists, not consumers, whom President Bush is determined to empower.

HE KNOWS WHEREOF HE SPEAKS: "Many [film critics quoted in newspaper ads] are habitués of the junket circuit, an all-expenses-paid gravy train where the studios give journalists free rooms and meals at posh hotels and the reporters return the favor with puffy celebrity profiles and enthusiastic review blurbs.... No one complains, and bad movies end up with great quotes."—John Horn, *Newsweek* Web exclusive, June 2



"*Newsweek* has had a first, exclusive look at 'Pearl Harbor,' the most anticipated movie of the summer. It's a blockbuster to be sure, a big, juicy slice of Americana that audiences will flock to when it opens on Memorial Day weekend."—John Horn, *Newsweek*, May 14

FINALLY, A VOICE OF REASON: "I am disappointed. And I earnestly ask you not to use alcohol."—Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of Russia's nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, in a letter to Bush twins Jenna and Barbara, quoted in *The Moscow Times*, June 1 ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rating W.'s judges.

Bench Press

By JEFFREY ROSEN

NOW THAT THEY control the Senate, some Democrats want to treat George W. Bush's judicial nominees as badly as Republicans treated Bill Clinton's. Senate Republicans repeatedly distorted the records of Clinton's nominees to the federal appellate courts, painting judicial moderates as judicial activists and denying them hearings. While Ronald Reagan and Clinton appointed similar numbers of appellate judges, 87 percent of Reagan's nominees were confirmed, compared with only 61 percent of Clinton's. So now Senate Democrats face a choice: Should they evaluate President Bush's conservative nominees on the merits or engage in partisan payback?

It depends how you define "conservative." Traditionally, a conservative judge is one who defers to the political branches of government, insisting that political battles be fought in legislatures rather than in courts. But in the past two decades this perspective has migrated from the GOP to the Democrats. On issues from federal power to discrimination, Democrats are now the party of judicial restraint and Republicans are the party of judicial activism. Bush has nominated several of these people, and Democrats should oppose them firmly. But they should confirm true judicial conservatives, even though liberal interest groups often will not grasp the difference.

Senate Democrats have already announced that they will give special scrutiny to a handful of nominees—including Jeffrey Sutton, nominated to the federal appeals court in Cincinnati, and Michael McConnell, nominated to the federal appeals court in Denver. But the very different philosophies of these two nominees illustrate the contrasts that should guide the Democrats' behavior.

McConnell is one of the most respected conservative legal scholars in the country—which is why distinguished liberal and moderate scholars such as Laurence Tribe of Harvard, Akhil Amar of Yale, and Cass Sunstein and David Strauss of the University of Chicago support his nomination. But two liberal groups, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, have aggressively opposed his nomination. *The New York Times* editorial page calls McConnell a "troubling nominee" and "[a] bitter opponent of abortion rights [who] also has little use for church-state separation."

Those charges make no sense. Senators shouldn't focus on the views of Bush's lower-court nominees on abortion, because the Supreme Court has left lower-court judges very little discretion on the abortion question. In the wake of the Court's expansive decision last term striking down 31 so-called partial-birth abortion laws, the only questions for lower-court judges to sort out are largely symbolic abortion restrictions such as parental notification and bills protecting live births. While these restrictions may affect the availability of abortion on the margins, they don't threaten its availability for most women. Lower-court judges have no authority to reconsider *Roe* v. *Wade*. And McConnell is particularly unlikely to try to rewrite abortion law on a lower court—while personally pro-life and a *Roe* critic, he is a scholar of Burke, with a deep respect for precedent.

To be sure, some senators worry about what McConnell would do were he nominated to the Supreme Court. In the welcome but unlikely event he is promoted, they could vote against him then (as liberals voted against Robert Bork, who was confirmed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit before being defeated for the Supreme Court). Besides, even as a Supreme Court justice, McConnell probably wouldn't have an occasion to reconsider *Roe*: He believes that no legislature would pass a pre-viability abortion restriction today, even in his home state of Utah. And if Congress passed a law protecting abortion, McConnell, unlike many conservatives, would uphold it.

And McConnell's views on church-state separation aren't just innocuous, they're praiseworthy. More than anyone else in the country, he is responsible for persuading the Supreme Court to abandon the extreme separationism of the 1970s, which required school districts to discriminate against religion by permitting all student organizations except prayer groups to meet after class on school property. Partly because of McConnell's scholarship and advocacy, in the '90s the Court instead embraced a healthy vision of religious neutrality, holding that the state may provide equal—but not favored—treatment for religious organizations. McConnell has defended the right of religious organizations to receive public aid on an equal basis with nonreligious ones, supporting the constitutionality of vouchers and charitable choice. But, unlike religious supremacists such as Justices Antonin Scalia, William Rehnquist, and Clarence Thomas, McConnell rejects state efforts to favor religion over irreligion: He testified before Congress against a school-prayer amendment to the Constitution and insisted that graduation prayers in public schools were unconstitutional, even before the Supreme Court invalidated them by a 5-4 vote in 1992. Scalia has described McConnell as "the most prominent scholarly critic" of Scalia's own, less generous view of the First Amendment's guarantees of the free exercise of religion.

McConnell's principled conservatism is most evident in his deference toward Congress's power to define illegal discrimination. The five conservative justices have refused to defer to Congress on this score, insisting that they alone are entitled to decide what counts as illegal and impermissible in America. In defending the constitutionality of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which the Supreme Court struck down by a 6-3 vote in 1997, McConnell defended Congress's right to adopt a more expansive view of discrimination than the Court itself has adopted. McConnell is an authority on the history of Reconstruction, and his scholarship has demonstrated that Congress—not the Court—is the branch of government that the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment entrusted with the principal authority to define and enforce protection for civil rights.

The most recent demonstration of McConnell's ability to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The SAT: Blaming the Messenger

This is the corrected version of E. D. Hirsch's essay that appeared in the [illegible] edition of The New Republic. The printed essay inadvertently added a [illegible] that made it appear that Professor Hirsch in fact regards as unpromising.

E. D. Hirsch Jr. is a professor of education and humanities, University of Virginia; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

Opponents of the SAT say we don't know what it measures and hint darkly that it smacks of discredited IQ testing. Decades ago, the distinguished psychometrician John Carroll stated, correctly, that the verbal SAT is an "advanced vocabulary test." At a lower level so are other standardized tests in common use such as the verbal portions of the Stanford 9, the ITBS, the CTBS, and, most significant of all, the well-studied AFQT, taken by those who enter military service. The verbal portions of these tests are highly correlated with one another and with real-world competencies in the armed forces, in college, and in the workplace.

Critics of the SAT concede that it was devised to ensure fairness in admission to elite colleges but that it has become unfair to able students who do not perform well on fill-in-the-bubble tests, to those who belong to ethnic groups and so are on uneasy terms with the cultural assumptions of the verbal SAT, and to those whose parents are not rich enough to pay for the expensive SAT courses that claim to raise scores. The result has been ethnically and racially unrepresentative admission to top universities. These sins against equity are compounded by sins against proper educational goals. Instead of prodding students to think about the civil rights movement or Shakespeare's plays, schools now run cram courses to improve performance on standardized tests.

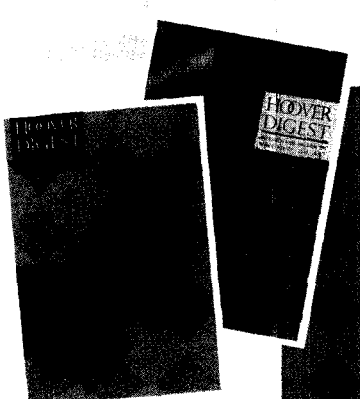
These are reasonable criticisms, but they are accompanied by vague recommendations for better tests that can disclose deeper skills than those measured by the verbal SAT, or for tests that are based on the school curriculum. Yet ***no test of "alternative" skills has proved to be fair and valid.*** The idea of using tests based on the school curriculum is more promising, but so far no statewide curriculum is specific enough to permit curriculum-based tests that are fair. Until fair and valid curriculum-based tests are developed, it is irresponsible to abandon a test like the SAT that is valid and fair.

I sympathize with the social motives behind this intellectual irresponsibility. I too want able disadvantaged students to have the opportunity to attend top colleges. But SAT critics have chosen the wrong target. The right target is K–12 public education. The most promising alternative to the SAT—curriculum-based tests—are themselves ultimately means for improving scores on the SAT by improving the underlying vocabulary knowledge that the SAT measures. Statewide curriculum-based tests recently introduced in Virginia have already produced a rise in SAT-style verbal tests.

So I agree that curriculum-based tests offer the most promising way for schools to overcome inequities created by class and caste. But ***the virtues of curriculum-based tests in no way invalidate the verbal SAT*** or similar tests, which are currently the only good instruments to calibrate the accuracy of curriculum-based tests that are offered as alternatives. If school-based tests do not produce rises in the verbal SAT, then something is wrong with the tests and the schools. Blaming the SAT is a short-sighted way of taking the heat off the public schools to provide genuine equality of educational opportunity.

— E. D. Hirsch Jr.

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



Interested in more commentary on public policy?

Visit us on-line at www.hoover.org or contact us to receive a complimentary copy of the 200-page, award-winning Hoover Digest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

separate his political preferences from his constitutional judgments came after *Bush* v. *Gore*, when he was one of the few conservative scholars to criticize the 5-4 decision to stop the Florida recount. In articles in *Slate.com* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and in an essay in a forthcoming book about the decision, McConnell acknowledged what other conservatives refused to concede: If you really believe that Florida's decision to apply different counting standards to ballots in the same county potentially violated the equal protection of the laws, then the logical and legally appropriate remedy was to let the recount continue under a uniform standard, as Justices David Souter and Stephen Breyer proposed, rather than stop it in its tracks. He also wrote in opposition to the impeachment of President Clinton.

MCCONNELL'S PRINCIPLED COMMITMENT to judicial restraint is even starker when you contrast it with the activism of some of his fellow nominees. For instance, Jeffrey Sutton, Bush's nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Sutton is the leading advocate in private practice of the federalism revolution that represents the Rehnquist Court's most distinctive legacy. In landmark cases this term and last, he successfully argued to the Supreme Court that private citizens cannot sue their state employers for violating the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. In these cases and others, including the Violence Against Women Act case, he showed no sensitivity to the historical arguments about Congress's authority under the Fourteenth Amendment made by McConnell and others. And Sutton is now trying to expand state sovereign immunity to make further incursions on Congress's power.

Some Republicans already seem to be backing away from Sutton because of his position in the ADA case, suggesting that he is personally opposed to vigorous enforcement of the act. But this charge is unfair. The Senate should reject Sutton not because he supports discrimination against the disabled (which he doesn't) but because he has refused to show proper respect for Congress's constitutional right to define discrimination more broadly than the Supreme Court. During the past six years, the conservative majority on the Court has struck down no fewer than 28 federal laws, a high-handed usurpation of power that Congress has endured with passive acquiescence. The Sutton nomination presents an ideal opportunity for the Senate to reassert its constitutional authority.

Democratic interest groups, of course, have little interest in distinguishing between nominees like McConnell and Sutton. Their constituencies require them to oppose nominees who disagree with their parochial positions rather than look seriously at nominees' views on the separation of powers and the Court's deference to the political branches. But if Democratic senators allow themselves to be driven by interest-group politics, they will focus their opposition on the most well-known candidates—such as McConnell—and end up confirming obscure ideologues who are more likely to decide cases on the basis of partisan affiliation rather than a principled commitment to judicial restraint. As *Bush* v. *Gore* demonstrated, there are too many of these people on the courts already. ■

Jeffords kills special ed. Reform School

By MICHELLE COTTLE

WASHINGTON IS STILL arguing over who will emerge the biggest winner from Jim Jeffords's decision to bolt the GOP: Senate Democrats, House Republicans, environmentalists, John McCain? But here's an early candidate: special education. When Jeffords let it be known that the White House's refusal to up special-ed funding helped spur his defection, he instantly turned the program into a political third rail. Senate Democrats will tiptoe around Jeffords's pet issue because they owe the Vermont maverick their majority; Senate Republicans won't go after it since that would look like petty payback and might reopen the party's education credibility gap that George W. Bush labored so hard to close. All of which virtually guarantees special ed a happy future of increased dollars and minimal scrutiny.

Which is a pity. Because special ed is a disaster. Poorly defined, poorly run, poorly enforced—it needs a massive overhaul. The Bush administration was on to something when it tried to tie funding increases to a reform commission. Among the system's fatal flaws: an expanding definition of what legally qualifies as "disabled," perverse incentives for schools and parents to categorize students as such, and a focus on process rather than progress (schools are judged on herding needy kids into special ed rather than seeing to it that they learn something). Worst of all, the system is rank with racial and economic bias. More money without massive reform will just make things worse. And, thanks to Jim Jeffords, that's exactly what's likely to happen.

Let's be clear: No one wants to return to the bad old days, when special-needs kids were hidden away in institutions. Jeffords should be commended for his role in passing the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA), mandating "free, appropriate public education" for the disabled. But what began as a smallish, manageable program (cost: $1 billion in 1980) has morphed into an ungovernable, wasteful monstrosity. So pathetic is supervision that no one knows how much special education really costs—estimates range from $35 billion to $60 billion annually—and states are complaining that it's soaking up more and more of their education budgets.

Much of special ed's financial distress stems from a scorching case of mission creep. Each year, the range of disabilities that the system recognizes as within its purview expands. By far the fastest-growing segment is Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)—a conveniently squishy category that can be stretched to encompass pretty much any kid not living up to his parents' expectations. In 1977 special ed served some 796,000 students with SLD. Twenty years later, that number

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had ballooned to 2.7 million. Why would anyone want to label a child "learning disabled"? For a variety of reasons. While school districts tend to suffer financially under their special-ed burdens, individual schools and classrooms can realize certain advantages. For instance, if a school is struggling to educate a busload of low-achievers, it's pretty much on its own. If those low-achievers are classified as learning disabled, however, state and federal dollars come rolling in. At the classroom level, where teachers face ever-larger class sizes and increasing discipline problems, the opportunity to shunt some of their biggest headaches into a separate class can be awfully tempting. Sweetening the deal, special-ed students are often exempt from—or, at the very least, judged differently on—the assessment tests that increasingly determine school and teacher performance.

Ironically, parents also have an interest in seeing their little darlings placed in special ed. In recent years, the stigma has (happily) faded and, as Ruth Shalit detailed in this magazine ("Defining Disability Down," August 25, 1997), the "disabled" label, if managed properly, entitles a student to considerable academic perks, such as one-on-one tutoring or additional time on exams. Moreover, many special-ed kids aren't held to the same behavioral standards as their classmates. Run-of-the-mill troublemakers can be punished, suspended, even expelled. Students with officially recognized behavioral disorders must be handled with care.

Debate rages over whether children would be better helped by a system that focused more on early intervention and prevention—with, for instance, intensive reading programs—and then treated special-ed kids more like everyone else. Today the program is designed for students to be there until they graduate. Once in the system, a child has only an estimated 5 percent chance of ever escaping.

WHICH BRINGS US to what, particularly for Democrats, should be one of special ed's most troubling flaws: rampant discrimination. A report released in March by the Harvard Civil Rights Project reveals that black children are three times more likely than white children to be labeled mentally retarded. Perhaps even more disturbing, a new book co-published by the Progressive Policy Institute and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation shows that the whiter the school district and the whiter the teaching staff, the higher the percentage of black kids (and, to a lesser degree, Hispanics) shuffled into special ed. In fact, race has a greater impact on a school's special-ed placement rates than student poverty, teacher salary, or per-pupil spending combined.

Not that schoolteachers are raging bigots. Rather, the authors posit, failure to grasp cultural differences may be a key to the disparity—especially now, when the oh-so-nebulous SLD category accounts for almost half of special-ed referrals. This theory seems in line with a quirky new study by an educator at Southwestern University showing that teachers tend to rate boys (regardless of race) who use "the stroll"—that highly stylized strut so popular among young black men—as more aggressive, lower-achieving, and more likely to need special ed. In other words, kids often get classified as special-ed students not because of how they learn but because of how they act.

The disparities continue once kids are in the system. In theory, special education can mean many things, from having a child work with reading tutors to, in rare cases, sending him to another school better equipped to meet his needs. In practice, far too many children wind up warehoused in glorified study halls, lumped in with other students suffering from wildly different problems, making meaningful instruction virtually impossible. Meanwhile, a fortunate few are sent to high-priced private schools at taxpayers' expense. What determines which kids wind up on which track: the ability of parents to work the system. At "due process" hearings, savvy parents contest district recommendations they deem insufficient, often hiring consultants and lawyers to help them press for the best (i.e., the most expensive) solutions. Stories of excess abound, such as when the D.C. school district got stuck with half the cost of a student's stay at an exclusive Vermont boarding school—including tuition, a personal computer, travel expenses, and skiing lessons. Such extravagances, of course, leave less money for the hordes of kids with no influential people to fight for them—disproportionately those from poor, broken, and minority homes.

IT'S THOSE SAME savvy parents who stymie efforts at reform. Before IDEA came up for reauthorization in 1997, Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield made a speech on the House floor about the need to address disparities in the program's funding and spending. Parents went berserk. As one aide told *The Washington Monthly* in 1996, "Parents came all the way from Oregon to bitch us out." Unsurprisingly, the reforms enacted in 1997 amounted to minor tinkering.

Next year, when IDEA comes up for reauthorization again, the result will likely be exactly the same. "If Bush thinks ESEA [the education act currently under reauthorization] was a hassle, just wait," warns Andy Rotherham, an education analyst at the Progressive Policy Institute. "IDEA is lying in the wings." And a big reason reform won't happen is Jim Jeffords. In April the White House offered Jeffords the additional $100 billion he wanted—on the condition that he accept a commission to explore ways to fix the system. (Among the reforms it might have considered: Florida's voucher program, which now provides all special-ed students with tuition subsidies to help level the racial and economic playing field.) But the senator balked—he wanted no strings attached to funding.

The rest is history—as may be any chance for real change. With Jeffords's new prominence, it's unlikely anyone will seriously challenge him on this issue again. And if reformers roll over and Jeffords achieves his goal of full, automatic funding, future reauthorizations will likely remain something close to a rubber stamp. The political reality, sighs Bush adviser Margaret La Montagne, is that once money is no longer an issue, no one is very eager to talk about meaningful change. "I've never been involved in a reform effort that didn't have money involved in the reform solution," she says. Odds are, neither has Jeffords. And, unfortunately, he likes it that way. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tel Aviv Dispatch

Admission Ticket

By YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

ON THE BASKETBALL COURT of the Shevach Mofet School of Sciences and Culture, a high school for the gifted that lost seven students in the recent disco bombing, a giant Star of David has been formed from memorial candles in tin cups. Teenage girls with wide, pale faces relight the flames the wind blows out. They hug each other without weeping—a stoicism learned in hiding their real selves from obtuse strangers.

Almost all the students at Shevach Mofet are Russian immigrants, as were all the disco victims—except for one "Israeli" (as they say here without irony) who happened to be walking by when the bomber exploded himself. "Why do you think we go to a Russian school and to a Russian disco?" asks Anna, from Ukraine. "Because the Israelis won't accept us. I went to an Israeli school before coming here, and all I heard was 'dirty Russian.' Even my teacher thought jokes about Russians were funny."

Now may be their moment of belated acceptance. Group admission into Israeli society passes through the cemetery, and with the disco attack—the worst terrorist atrocity since 1996—the Russians find themselves transformed into the latest standard-bearers of Israel's struggle. For the first time since Russians arrived in massive numbers in the early '90s and then disappeared into separate neighborhoods with their own newspapers, theaters, and clubs, Israeli society is telling them they've come home. Taunts like "Russian prostitutes" and "Russian mafia" have become taboo. For a few days, at least, the language of national mourning has become the Russian-accented Hebrew our comedians love to mimic. The headline of the newspaper *Ma'ariv* was printed in Russian and Hebrew: "WE WEEP FOR OUR CHILDREN," poignant because many Israelis haven't regarded Russian immigrants as "ours." We wept, also, for the two single mothers who lost their only children, emblematic of this immigration of meager and broken families eked out of the Soviet devastation. TV cameras offered us glimpses of the victims' homes—little apartments with thin furniture, fragile reconstructions of uprooted lives. Yet the well-meaning but paltry newspaper descriptions of the murdered teens—"beautiful," "quiet," "a good girl"—only reinforced how little we know about these people who live on the margins of Israeli consciousness.

Some students at Shevach Mofet eagerly embrace their new role as national emblems. "Now Israelis will realize that we're part of the fight for this country's survival," says Gabi, from Uzbekistan. But others don't want to represent a society that has done little to make them feel as if they belong. For them, the disco tragedy isn't national, it's personal. They came here to escape Russian history; yet now they've been thrust into Jewish history, whose pathology bewilders them. "How can anyone hate so much?" they ask each other, referring to the suicide bomber. The very question reveals a lack of Jewish rootedness; it is hard to imagine Israeli-born youths conceding such naïveté. On the bulletin board is a poster: "WE COULD PROMISE REVENGE.... BUT ALL WE WANT TO SAY TO OUR FRIENDS IS THAT WE WILL LONG FOR THEM FOREVER."

ISRAEL HAS ALWAYS been cruel to its immigrants. Young Sabras despised Holocaust survivors for their supposed passivity and called them "soap," after the rumor that the Nazis had made soap out of Jewish fat. Traditionalist Sephardim were mocked as primitives by the secular Ashkenazi establishment. All immigrants were once routinely dismissed as *dor hamidbar*, the Israelites in the desert who had to die off before their children could inherit the Promised Land. That contempt used to be justified by ideology—a revolutionary society's need to refashion the Diaspora Jew into a secular, nationalist, and socialist Israeli. Now, though, an Israel culturally at war with itself no longer tries to impose a single identity on newcomers. Instead, paternalism has been replaced by indifference and, at times, even hatred.

Nonetheless, the Russians are, economically, Israel's great immigrant success story. Instead of the massive unemployment and homelessness predicted at the beginning of the '90s, most have found jobs and apartments. And they are entering the middle class. Paradoxically, their lack of Zionist motivation has helped them cope with Israel's tepid welcome. Having come for personal reasons rather than for national ones, they aren't surprised when Israel treats them as any society would treat newcomers. A poll taken among immigrants immediately after the disco bombing found that 85 percent don't regret moving here; 66 percent say the intifada has strengthened their connection to Israel.

Yet those ties are being tested by Ariel Sharon's new restraint. While a majority of veteran Israelis support the cease-fire that followed the disco bombing, most Russians oppose it. Indeed, many interpret the government's restraint as one more sign of a decline in Israeli will. The great fear among Russians, as Natan Sharansky once told me, is to again find themselves trapped in a disintegrating society that has lost its sense of self-preservation. Refugees from one failed social experiment, Russians worry that they may have now joined another. And if that perception grows, Sharansky warned, Russians could begin emigrating.

The fear that Israel is losing its nerve is widespread among the students tending the memorial candles at Shevach Mofet. "What country doesn't hit back at terrorists?" demands Tanya, from Ukraine, most of whose memories are Israeli but who still calls herself Russian and doesn't know if she'll ever fully belong here.

Would she consider emigrating?

"That's exactly what the Arabs want," she says, recalling the defiance that built and sustained this country. Without quite realizing it, Tanya has just become an Israeli. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Getting Testy

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

Across the country, newspapers report that parents are worried about their children being over-tested, and teachers are concerned about the loss of their ability to teach anything but what is on a test. And we're told students are more and more fearful about passing these tests.

While these worries are justified, well-made tests are essential to determining how well children are learning. We can't have high standards unless we have a way to measure whether we're meeting those standards.

Teachers have always given tests, and kids have always worried about them. What is different today is that almost every state has adopted a standards-based approach to education. All children are expected to meet higher standards—and that's good.

Linking tests to curricula

But few states have tests based on rich curricula linked to high standards, and even fewer have provided the supports teachers and students need to meet the higher standards—and that's bad.

In some schools, parents worry that their children are subjected to high-stakes tests in classes that are too big, and in which teachers are overworked and under-prepared. In others, they worry that rich curricula are being eliminated and too much time is spent preparing for and taking tests.

What is more, tests are misused when they are the sole determinant of promotion; they're misleading if passing scores are arbitrarily set, and they're unfair if they're not closely tied to curricula. And even if those problems are dealt with, testing companies can make mistakes, as a recent report in the *New York Times* documented.

Now there is concern about a new Congressional proposal that would require states to test every child every year in grades 3-8—a mandate that might push testing companies beyond their limits and cut short efforts to develop high-quality assessments linked to state standards.

If Congress mandates these tests, it's important that they not simply be layered on top of others already in place, and that their high cost not result in states buying dumbed-down commercial tests. Research shows the development and administration of these new tests would cost states at least $2.6 billion; if Congress requires them, it should also require that they be of high quality—and it should pay for that quality.

Yet none of these issues should prompt us to give up on testing. So, here are five commonsense suggestions to ensure an educationally sound testing policy:

Good tests, done well, will benefit students.

1. Tests should not be used to determine "winners" or "losers." A good test should benefit students by showing them and their teachers and parents where more work is needed. To do that, assessments have to be based on high academic standards and corresponding curricula. For that to happen, teachers, not just testing employees or state officials, must be involved in developing and reviewing test items.

2. Do not over-test. It takes time away from teaching and learning. Children are given tests for different reasons at different times. To avoid over-testing, we need to coordinate these efforts and avoid duplication.

3. Testing must be fair. It should comply with professional standards for fair testing and appropriate use. Progress should be reported for all students by grade level, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status so extra help can be provided where it is needed. Students with disabilities or limited English proficiency should have appropriate accommodations.

4. No child's future should depend on a single test. Other evidence needs to be included in such decisions. Test results should identify students who need help—and they should get that help before high-stakes consequences are attached to tests.

5. Tests should measure what is learned. They should be based on the curriculum that is taught, but they should not *be* the curriculum. No school should feel pressed to eliminate valuable art or music classes to allow more time for test preparations. Nor should a single high-stakes test determine what gets taught in every subject.

A measure, not a cure

Tests are vital tools for measuring student progress and for identifying where students'—and schools'—achievement can be improved. But a test is a thermometer, not a treatment. More and more testing is not a "cure" for poor student achievement. That can only be solved through a comprehensive program of lower class size, highly qualified teachers, appropriate instructional materials and adequate school facilities.

Good tests, used properly, will help us understand how children are doing, help direct resources to those in need, and reassure parents that their children are getting a broad and rigorous education. ▮

Where We Stand is published once every month in The New Republic. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001. **© Sandra Feldman 2001.** **Visit our web site (http://www.aft.org).**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sulaymaniyah Dispatch

Food Fight

By Michael Rubin

The Azad pharmacy in Sulaymaniyah is stocked with medicines. So is the Shara pharmacy next door. In the cool early evening hours, the street bustles with shoppers, some of whom drift inside. They hand over prescriptions, pay the equivalent of a few cents, and walk out with antibiotics for their wives or medicine for their children. Down the street, shops sell watermelons, cheese, vegetables, and meat. Even the liquor stores have large inventories. Mazdas and Mercedeses are becoming more common on the newly paved roads; in the wealthier areas, it is not uncommon to see BMWs. Sony PlayStation has become the latest craze, even among housewives. None of which would be particularly noteworthy, except that Sulaymaniyah is in Iraq.

For years Saddam Hussein has loudly complained that U.N. prohibitions on the sale of Iraqi oil, imposed when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, are starving his people. To prove his point, Saddam has taken foreign reporters and diplomats on tours throughout greater Iraq, where the citizenry does indeed seem to be suffering mass deprivation. And his public relations campaign has borne fruit, eroding public support for sanctions in Europe and in the United States and contributing to the Bush administration's recent proposal to radically scale them back.

But Sulaymaniyah, a city in northern Iraq with approximately 500,000 inhabitants, tells a different story. Indeed, across a crescent-shaped slice of northern Iraq, the picture is the same: The shops are stocked, and the people are eating. Northern Iraq lives under exactly the same international sanctions as the rest of the country. The difference here is that local Kurdish authorities, in conjunction with the United Nations, spend the money they get from the sale of oil. Everywhere else in Iraq, Saddam does. And when local authorities are determined to get food and medicine to their people—instead of, say, reselling these supplies to finance military spending and palace construction—the current sanctions regime works just fine. Or, to put it more bluntly, the United Nations isn't starving Saddam's people. Saddam is.

You can see this starkly in a place like Dohuk, about 300 miles northwest of Sulaymaniyah, where a two-story supermarket has arisen from the ashes of an Iraqi Revolutionary Guards base. Shoppers enjoy hamburgers and ice cream in the café; elsewhere they buy frozen meat and choose among a wide variety of canned goods from Iran, Turkey, and Europe. Upstairs, shoppers can try on locally made, and even Italian designer, shoes and clothes. At checkout, cashiers swipe each item with infrared scanners.

Northern Iraq has been independent of Saddam (and guarded by U.S. and British patrols) since the Kurdish uprising that followed the Gulf war in 1991. And, under the sanctions regime in place ever since, the north receives 13 percent of Baghdad's oil income and can use the money to finance U.N.-approved projects. Those projects are wide-ranging, and they have transformed northern Iraq. Where Saddam's Baath Party headquarters and political prison were once located, the University of Dohuk now sits. Other cities are building schools, sewage systems, and hospitals. The din of generators is a constant distraction, but it's also a sign of the Kurds' effective administration: Local authorities have built the generators because Baghdad has reneged on its oft-repeated promises to provide the north with adequate electricity. (Indeed, Saddam has gone so far as to deny visas to the U.N. contractors and specialists who are supposed to be building new power plants in the north.)

Even rural areas share in the bounty. New schools and medical clinics grace small villages along rebuilt roads. Westerners may remember the mountainous Halabja region from photographs taken in 1988, during Saddam's infamous Anfal campaign, when the Iraqi regime gassed hundreds of Kurds there. Now Kurdish authorities are clearing the region of mines and introducing agricultural and reforesting programs—programs financed by oil-for-food money. But the most striking proof that the sanctions themselves don't make Iraqis suffer lies in northern Iraq's public health statistics: Infant mortality in the region is actually *lower* than it was before the United Nations imposed sanctions in 1990. "When I was in primary school, we had to scrounge for food," one university student joked. "Now my mother complains if she can't find truffles in the market."

It could be this way in southern Iraq, too. But incredibly, even as Saddam's regime milks its people's suffering for international sympathy, it sells food abroad that is earmarked for Iraqi citizens. According to the U.S. State Department, in October 1999 Allied patrols in the Persian Gulf stopped three ships that were carrying food out of Iraq. Near the Iranian border, I watched smugglers load sacks of rice and grain (and whiskey) for export. When you throw in the fact that per capita income in Iraq (approximately $1,000) remains higher than in Syria ($900) and Yemen ($270), where few people go hungry, it becomes clear that there's no reason why Iraqis should be suffering—particularly when Saddam's regime has found $2 billion to build palaces, and even an amusement park for party officials, since the sanctions began. Of course, you won't see these things on the official tour: Unlike the Kurds, who allowed me to travel freely on my own, Saddam's regime insists on carefully managing visits.

This is not to say the sanctions don't affect citizens in the north at all. Although people have food, unemployment is high, and the economy remains weak. Whereas the Iraqi dinar was once worth three dollars, one dollar now buys 18 Iraqi dinars in the streets of northern Iraq. Still, this is far better than in the south, where undisciplined financial prac-

Michael Rubin, a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, recently returned from nine months in Iraq, where he was a Carnegie Council fellow working at northern Iraq's universities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tices (such as printing new currency whenever Saddam needs to pay workers) have driven the dinar down to one-hundredth of its value in the north. In fact, in northern cities, most businesses and financial institutions will only accept older issues of the currency—which were minted in Britain rather than Baghdad. One old man jokes that the Iraqi currency used to picture three horses, but now, he says, pointing to Saddam's picture, it pictures just one horse's ass. Elsewhere in Iraq, the comment would get him a firing squad.

Which brings me to the other great advantage of living in northern Iraq: freedom. While the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan administers Sulaymaniyah, and its rival, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, controls Irbil and Dohuk, the major cities are dotted with offices of other political parties—socialist, Communist, Islamist, Assyrian, and Turkoman. In the run-up to the May 26 municipal elections in Dohuk and Irbil, the banners and flyers of rival candidates and parties made the streets look like an American city in October. Many political parties print their own newspapers and operate their own TV stations. Students surf the Internet at northern Iraq's three universities and in the growing number of Internet cafés.

In teahouses and restaurants, patrons tell stories of how they were imprisoned or tortured by Saddam's government. One man was thrown in prison when his seven-year-old child repeated his criticism of the government to a first-grade teacher. Others—the Kurdish and Turkoman former residents of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk—tell stories of how they fled north from Saddam's ethnic cleansing in the oil-rich areas. This winter, hundreds huddled in a tent city outside Sulaymaniyah nicknamed the "Spring of Satan" while northern authorities tried to find them houses; Saddam's government had ejected them, then seized their property and turned it over to functionaries of his ruling Baath Party.

All of which helps explain why, despite the inconveniences, residents here don't want sanctions weakened—they want them strengthened. Indeed, when the Bush administration recently announced it was going to use "smart sanctions" to target the military—not Iraqi civilians—one farmer in a rural village asked rhetorically how the administration could talk about Saddam's war crimes one day and reward him the next. Didn't the United States care that Saddam started two wars and used gas against Iraq's non-Arab population? Then again, whatever doubts northern Iraqis have about American resolve, it's better than the sheer disdain they feel for the French and the Russians, who, they say, sacrifice freedom to win lucrative contracts from Saddam. "Surely they understand that we hate Saddam," says one northern Iraqi deputy minister. "Once he is gone, we won't forget that they wanted to help him."

That attitude applies to military operations, too. Some in the north do criticize American bombing in the south, but only because they think it does not go far enough: They want a sustained military campaign to remove Saddam from power. People here also vigorously support the American- and British-enforced no-fly zones that protect the north's independence. People in Dohuk, just five minutes from Iraqi government lines, visibly relax when they hear Allied sorties flying overhead. They understand that the real menace to their well-being—and to that of their fellow Iraqis—isn't international pressure. It's the dictator to the south. ■

W.'s sweatshop nominee.

Isle of Blight

By Franklin Foer

Patrick Pizzella has been many things in his career: director of intergovernmental and regional affairs at the Small Business Administration, deputy undersecretary at the Department of Education, a $175,000-per-year lobbyist at the firm Preston Gates. So when George W. Bush nominated him to be assistant secretary of labor for administration and management, the Senate perused his hefty CV and gave him its unanimous consent. To the Democratic eyes on Ted Kennedy's Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Pizzella seemed no different from the other lobbyists flooding the new administration. As one Democratic aide notes, "We can't battle them all."

But had Kennedy's people paid closer attention to page 9 of Pizzella's Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report, they would have discovered that he is, in fact, quite exceptional, especially for a nominee to the Labor Department. For there, hidden in plain view, Pizzella notes that he provided "[g]eneral lobbying representation" for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Although they sound like a tropical paradise, the Mariana Islands are actually something close to the opposite. An American territory in the Pacific, just north of Guam, they have become a notorious haven for foreign-owned sweatshops in recent years. According to a 1998 report by a congressionally mandated task force, 91 percent of the Marianas' private workforce consists of "indentured alien[s]" usually working to pay off fees their employers charged for resettling them in the islands. Describing coerced abortions, guarded labor barracks, and systematic underpayment, the task force labeled the islands a national "embarrassment."

Blocking any federal regulations that might lessen that embarrassment was the goal of Pizzella's "representation," which lasted from 1996 to last year. It's hard to imagine anyone you would want less in the top ranks of the department ostensibly dedicated to protecting workers' rights.

For 30 years following their 1944 liberation from Japan by American GIs, no one in the United States paid much attention to the Marianas. Aside from the military bases they housed, the islands idled in the sun like a setting for a Graham Greene novel. The U.S. government sank about $90 million into building infrastructure in the islands and aiding their small indigenous populations, but that was about it.

Then, in 1975, the islands voted to become a U.S. commonwealth. In order to give the economy of the newly founded Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) a much-needed shot in the arm, the Ford administration handed it an unprecedented deal. Marianas businesses would be allowed to ship products to the United States without quotas, tariffs, or duties. They could even sew the "Made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the USA" label into their products. But—and here's the real coup—they wouldn't have to adhere to American labor or immigration laws.

As the new arrangement went into effect, so did the laws of economics. Entrepreneurs from China, Taiwan, and South Korea rushed to set up factories for American clothiers (including J. Crew, Ralph Lauren, and Brooks Brothers) on Saipan, the most populous island in the Mariana archipelago. To make the blue jeans and oxford shirts, factory owners recruited heavily from the slums and farms of Asia. In the two decades following the 1975 treaty, the CNMI's population increased by more than 250 percent. Fifteen thousand Chinese migrated to the island of Saipan alone. By the late '90s, the CNMI was sending $1 billion in textiles annually to the U.S. mainland.

When workers arrived, they found a grotesque parody of everything the name United States is supposed to represent. According to a 1997 federal report, "Violations of labor standards and other abuses appear common.... Chinese contract workers allegedly work under 'shadow' contracts signed in their home country that subvert their rights under the U.S. Constitution.... There are numerous reported cases of retaliation against workers filing complaints. Foreign contract workers report being victims of such crimes as rape, assault, and forced prostitution by those who have recruited them to work in the CNMI." The feds even documented that many workers unwittingly signed contracts that "forbade the worker[s] from falling in love, having a baby, or protesting about labor conditions."

The anecdotal evidence is equally disturbing. A 1998 article in *Time* magazine told the story of a 26-year-old Chinese woman named Li Li who worked 18-hour days in a factory cutting textiles: "At night she and 700 other workers were locked up in company barracks infested with rats and equipped with just one outside toilet for every 50 people. The residents were allowed out only on Sundays for a maximum of one hour. When she complained about conditions, according to her account, she and another female worker were beaten by factory foremen wielding heavy dressmaking scissors." The abuse of the workers was so extensive that in 1986 the Reagan administration—not exactly known for its stellar enforcement of labor laws—sent a letter sternly reprimanding the CNMI. In 1995 the government of the Philippines—even less well-known for enforcing labor laws—banned new workers from going to the Marianas.

But it was something else that happened that year—the Senate's vote to impose U.S. immigration laws on the islands—that finally made the CNMI get serious about influencing Washington. In an effort to prevent the immigration bill from becoming law, the islands' government hired the law firm Preston Gates to lobby legislators in the House. More specifically, it hired the firm's top lobbyist, Jack Abramoff, a longtime right-winger who viewed the Marianas assignment as an ideological crusade. In an interview with *The Washington Post*'s Juliet Eilperin last year, he compared federal regulation of the CNMI to the Nazis' Nuremberg laws: "The[y] are immoral laws to destroy the economic lives of a people." In assembling his team for the Marianas account, Abramoff plucked conservative lobbyists from key congressional offices—two came directly from Tom DeLay's staff. He also picked Patrick Pizzella.

ASK PIZZELLA ABOUT his work for Preston Gates and he'll call it "ancient history," say "I don't want to go down memory lane," and note that he's "not in a policy-making position regarding the Marianas." But Pizzella's history with the Marianas isn't that ancient at all. Until a few months ago, Pizzella worked on the Marianas account, tasked with building sympathy for the CNMI within the conservative movement. It was an assignment to which he was well-suited, having spent his entire adult life in GOP circles. As a senior at the University of South Carolina, he'd hurried his graduation in order to help organize Ronald Reagan's 1976 primary campaign in Nebraska and Wisconsin. After Reagan became president, Pizzella bounced from agency to agency, accruing an array of conservative friends. "You would just always see him around," says the Heritage Foundation's Dan Mitchell.

Much of Pizzella's coalition-building on behalf of the Marianas was typical Beltway networking. "He'd come to Grover Norquist's Wednesday meetings to hawk his goods," says one conservative. When CNMI officials came to Washington, Pizzella hosted dinners at downtown eateries like Sam & Harry's steakhouse, where they met with conservative activists. But Pizzella also deployed a device considerably more persuasive than filet mignon: the fully paid tropical junket.

Between 1996 and 1998, Pizzella brought Republicans on regular jaunts to the islands—I spoke to eleven he'd personally invited. By *The Wall Street Journal*'s estimate, more than 100 representatives, congressional aides, and activists accepted Preston Gates's invitations. Nor was it just Hill dwellers. Pizzella specialized in courting conservative intellectuals and journalists. In 1997 he organized a trip that included Clint Bolick (of the Institute for Justice), John Fund (of *The Wall Street Journal*), Kellyanne Conway (a pollster), Ron Bailey (of *Reason*), and Marc Lampkin (then general counsel to the House Republican Conference), among others. As one think-tank denizen told me: "If you were a conservative intellectual and you didn't get invited, you just knew you weren't cool."

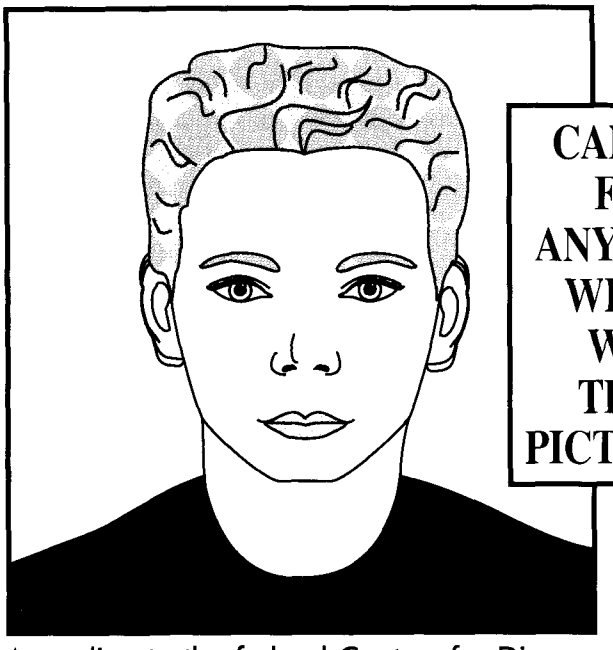
Pizzella's guests flew first-class, dined at fine restaurants, and stayed at the beachfront Hyatt Regency, where they spent evenings lounging at the hotel's bar. When DeLay visited the CNMI over New Year's Eve in 1998, he played two rounds of golf at the Lao Lao Bay course.

But Pizzella also made sure the junkets played to his vacationers' ideological predispositions. On the face of it, the Marianas development strategy wasn't necessarily one conservatives would cheer. Anti-Communists might have been upset to learn that some of the islands' garment manufacturers are indirectly owned by the Chinese government, which presumably uses the profits to fund its military. Social conservatives would have been troubled by anecdotes of coerced abortions. But Pizzella's tours were carefully calibrated. For libertarians, they emphasized the islands' lack of regulations. ("It is a perfect petri dish of capitalism," DeLay has proclaimed.) For social conservatives, they highlighted the islands' growing church population. Pizzella even arranged

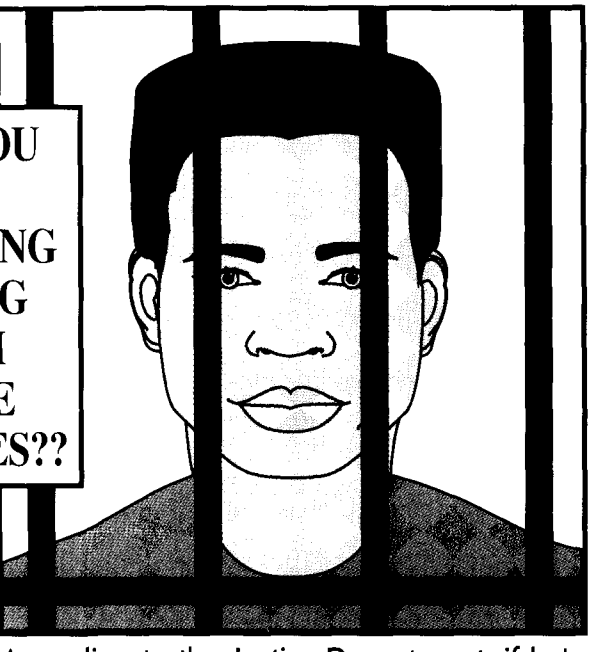
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ADVERTISEMENT

WHITE KIDS ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE USING (AND SELLING) DRUGS!



CAN YOU FIND ANYTHING WRONG WITH THESE PICTURES??



According to the federal Centers for Disease Control, he's 4 times more likely than his African-American classmate to be a regular cocaine user.

According to the Justice Department, if he's arrested on drug charges, he's 1-1/2 times more likely than his white classmate to be sent to prison.

White high-school students who are current users of cocaine: 4.1%[1]

Chance of a white person ever trying an illicit drug in their lifetime: 42%[2]

Percent of felony drug defendants in state courts who are white: 37%[3]

Percent of white drug felons given probation or nonincarceration sentence by state courts: 32%[4]

Percent of white drug felons sentenced to prison by state courts each year: 27%[5]

African-American high-school students who are current users of cocaine: 1.1%[1]

Chance of an African-American person ever trying an illicit drug in their lifetime: 37.7%[2]

Percent of felony drug defendants in state courts who are black: 61%[3]

Percent of black drug felons given probation or nonincarceration sentence by state courts: 25%[4]

Percent of black drug felons sentenced to prison by state courts each year: 43%[5]

BLACK KIDS ARE MORE LIKELY TO GO TO PRISON!

Note:
According to the US Justice Department and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, drug users typically buy their drugs from sellers of their own racial or ethnic background. Research of Ethnicity & Race of Drug Sellers and Users: US Dept. of Justice National Institute of Justice & the Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Crack, Powder Cocaine, and Heroin: Drug Purchase and Use Patterns in Six U.S. Cities," December 1997, p.1, 16, and p. 15, Table 16.

Sources:

[1] Data on drug use by high-school students: Youth Risk Behavior Survey 1999, Centers for Disease Control, reported in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 49, No. SS-5, p. 66, Table 24.

[2] Data on lifetime prevalence of drug use: US Dept. of HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Summary of Findings from the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse," August 2000, p. G-13, Table G-13.

[3] Demogaphic data on felony drug defendants in state courts: US Dept. of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. "Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, 1996," October 1999, p.4, Table 3

[4] Demographic data on felony drug defendants in state courts: US Dept. of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, "State Court Sentencing of Convicted Felons, 1996," February 2000, p. 13, Table 2.5

[5] Demographic data on felony drug defendants in state courts: US Dept. of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, "State Court Sentencing of Convicted Felons, 1996," February 2000, p. 13, Table 2.5

Kevin B. Zeese, President, Common Sense for Drug Policy
3220 "N" Street, NW, #141, Washington, D.C. 20007 * 703-354-9050 * fax 703-354-5695 * info@csdp.org
For more information, visit www.csdp.org and www.drugwarfacts.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for Bolick, a staunch proponent of school choice, to meet government officials to discuss the CNMI's interest in school vouchers. As David Cahn, a former consultant to the Marianas, puts it, "Pat's very effective. Visitors to the island seemed to get all the right information."

There are several ways to measure the work Preston Gates did on the Marianas' behalf. For starters, consider the propaganda generated from just that one 1997 trip led by Pizzella. Bolick returned to defend the Marianas in editorials for *Human Events* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Bailey penned his fond observations of the island in *The American Enterprise*. And the Heritage Foundation's Mitchell, another junketeer, wrote in *The Washington Times* that "Washington politicians should cease their assault on Saipan." Another way would be to look at the firm's billing—more than $8 million for the CNMI account over five years—or its own explanation of what that money bought. In a memo to the Hong Kong textile mogul Willie Tan, intercepted by *The Washington Post* in 1998, Abramoff wrote that, "thanks to past trips," the CNMI had "many friends on the Appropriations Committees in the Congress." But perhaps the best way to measure Abramoff's and Pizzella's work on behalf of the Marianas is this: Despite all the reports of abuses, Congress hasn't passed a single piece of legislation to reform business practices there.

Considering the $70 million that unions spent on the Democrats' behalf in 2000, it's hardly surprising that the Bush administration's early policies and appointments have been labor-unfriendly. The administration's guiding principle, one transition official told *U.S. News & World Report*, is to "stick it to labor." So ergonomics regulations have been revoked, and funding for a program to eliminate child labor abroad has been slashed by $15 million. Labor Department appointments have included Linda Chavez—whose selection seemed deliberately designed to razz labor—and Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's son Eugene, an orchestrator of business's campaign to quash ergonomics regulations. And now Pizzella will oversee the department's budget and organizational infrastructure.

What's harder to fathom is labor's lassitude in responding to this onslaught. When I mentioned Pizzella to Ann Hoffman, legislative director for UNITE, the textile workers' union, she paused and then replied, "Wait, exactly who is this guy again?" Charles Mercer, of the AFL-CIO's Union Label and Service Trades Department, said, "The name doesn't ring a bell." And Bill Samuel, a lobbyist for the AFL-CIO, told me, "We haven't really looked into him." Oops. ■

Why Jack Welch isn't God.

Overvalued

By ROB WALKER

A RECENT ISSUE of *Publishers Weekly* featured a two-page advertising spread touting "the year's most eagerly anticipated book." The promised $1 million marketing onslaught apparently will include national TV and radio spots, appearances on CNBC and the "Today" show, and "transit advertising" in New York, Washington, D.C., and Boston.

In other words, get ready to know *Jack*. The book's title, subject, and nominal author is, of course, Jack Welch, the departing chairman and chief executive officer of General Electric (which owns CNBC and the "Today" show) and easily the most lionized corporate hero alive. Warner Books famously agreed to pay Welch $7.1 million—nearly a record for nonfiction—to tell his story; the book will likely have to be a million-seller just to break even.

It's hard to imagine what *Jack*, due out in September, will add to the already voluminous body of work describing Welch and his management techniques. Among the at least ten titles in this oeuvre are such classics as *Get Better or Get Beaten!: 31 Leadership Secrets from GE's Jack Welch*; *Control Your Destiny or Someone Else Will: Lessons in Mastering Change—From the Principles Jack Welch Is Using to Revolutionize GE*; *Jack Welch and the GE Way*; *Business the Jack Welch Way*; and the just-published update *Get Better or Get Beaten!: 29 Leadership Secrets from GE's Jack Welch*. (Apparently two of the original secrets didn't pan out.) Welch's hagiographers have declared him "the Vince Lombardi of business," "a heroic form of CEO," "the world's greatest business leader," "the manager of the century," and "CEO of the century." You'd almost think Welch was single-handedly responsible for the growth of the entire global economy. Oh, wait, he's been credited with that as well: "As the most widely admired, studied, and imitated CEO of his time," argued *Fortune*, "Welch has enriched not only GE's shareholders but also the shareholders of companies around the globe. His total economic impact is impossible to calculate but must be a staggering multiple of his GE performance."

Welch's critics (when they can be found) typically point to the massive layoffs he has overseen at GE or to allegations that GE plants have polluted the Hudson River. (Thomas F. O'Boyle's muckraking book *At Any Cost* is probably the most comprehensive anti-Welch brief to date.) But these and related attacks, whatever their merit, are largely beside the point as far as Welch's boosters are concerned. As long as GE isn't overwhelmed by some massive scandal (think Fire-

ROB WALKER writes the "Moneybox" column for *Slate.com* and is a former editor for *Money* and *Fortune*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stone) or federal lawsuit (think Microsoft), Welch will ultimately be judged by his impact on GE's bottom line.

And that impact looks impressive. In 1980, the year before Welch became CEO, GE recorded revenues of roughly $26.8 billion; in 2000 they were nearly $130 billion. When Welch took over, the stock market judged the company to be worth about $14 billion. Today its market capitalization is roughly $490 billion, making it the most valuable company in the world.

But there's a difference between being a good CEO—which Welch has been—and being the undisputed all-time champion of corporate leadership. Or, to put it another way, think of Jack Welch as a stock. If the most sensible way to gauge the current value of a stock is the famous price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio—that is, the ratio of a stock's market cost to the company's actual or expected profits—then consider Welch's reputation as "price" and his achievement as "earnings." A stock can be overvalued, sometimes wildly so, even if its earnings look solid. In bottom-line terms, Welch's achievements are solid. But his reputation? As a multiple of what he has actually accomplished, it's gotten far too pricey to buy.

What lessons could *Jack* contain that would justify its $7.1 million advance? Well, one key piece of advice that Welch might offer—but probably won't—is that the best way to look like a great manager is to work for a great company. CEOs are often depicted as almost single-handedly responsible for the good fortunes of their companies. (This is a notion CEOs embrace when crafting or defending their compensation packages.) So it was Lou Gerstner who turned around IBM, Lee Iacocca who saved Chrysler, and Jack Welch who "revived" GE. But sometimes the truth is just the reverse. Although most observers discuss GE as the house that Jack built, it's more true to say that GE is the house that built Jack.

John Francis Welch (i.e., Jack) took the reins at GE in 1981, following a long, exhaustive, and competitive succession process overseen by his predecessor, Reg Jones. But, contrary to the notion that Welch inherited a moribund company, things were going pretty well already. Over the course of Jones's stint at the top, which began in 1972, revenue had grown at an average annual rate of 12 percent, and earnings had grown at 16 percent. The spin offered by Robert Slater, author of *The New GE: How Jack Welch Revived an American Institution* (as well as three other Welch volumes), is that Welch "did not want to wait until General Electric was in trouble.... To keep those figures from declining, Welch knew he had to push the company to become more competitive." Janet Lowe, author of *Jack Welch Speaks* and the recent biography *Welch: An American Icon*, echoes this line: "The challenge for Welch was to spot trouble before it occurred, to take preventative measures, and to make the most of GE's tremendous momentum."

Fine. And in fact GE has averaged a solid 12 percent annual earnings growth throughout Welch's time at the top, and about 15 percent over the last eight years. But if no trouble had yet "occurred" when he took over, and GE already boasted "tremendous momentum," why credit Welch with a revival rather than with maintaining a past record of excellence? The truth is that while CEO biographers need a larger-than-life hero, GE did not. Indeed, as James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras explain in their celebrated and insightful 1994 book *Built to Last*, the firm has enjoyed success under a series of innovative chief executives stretching back to the early 1900s.

ROB BARBONI

Early in the twentieth century GE started what's been called the first major industrial research lab in the United States. Its top managers in the '20s and '30s pioneered "enlightened management" ideas, such as paid vacations for most workers, that helped attract and retain top talent, and they shrewdly moved the company into home appliances. "Few corporations are more progressive or better managed," observed *Forbes* in 1929. In the '50s GE was again a pioneer, this time in decentralizing its management structure to encourage divisional independence and growth, paving the way for new business units organized around, for instance, plastics. Its CEO in the '50s, Ralph Cordiner, founded the company's well-known corporate university in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, which has been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

described as the first private facility designed to codify and teach management skills. In the '60s the company experimented with new industries once again, and, while some of these experiments floundered, others—plastics, airplane engines, and especially the decision to let its credit division branch out into other financial services—laid the foundation for the industrial conglomerate that GE is today. When Welch took over after the recession- and inflation-plagued '70s, Jones was a celebrated figure whose tenure had left GE, in the words of Welch biographer Lowe, "one of the strongest [companies] in America" in financial terms; its debt rating was triple-A.

How strong has GE been under Welch? One popular benchmark is return on equity (ROE)—earnings as a percentage of shareholder equity—which measures how efficiently management has used shareholders' capital to create profits. Last year the median figure for profits as a percentage of shareholder equity among Fortune 500 companies was 14.6 percent. According to GE, its average annual ROE under Welch has been 25.8 percent, which is exceptional. But it's not unique, even for GE. In *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras compile pre-tax ROE figures for seven "chief executive eras" at GE; they find that Welch ranked fifth. (Using an updated number provided by GE that includes the exceptional boom years since that book was published, he places third.) Collins and Porras do not suggest Welch has done a bad job—they go out of their way to note their respect "for his remarkable track record" and "immense achievements." Their point is that they "respect GE even more for *its* remarkable track record of continuity in top management excellence over the course of a hundred years."

Indeed, despite the marketing of Welch as a "self-made man," a "rebel," and a "revolutionary," he's actually a company man who rose up through the ranks and then continued many of the traditions of his predecessors. In keeping with GE custom, Welch became CEO after spending his entire career at the company. He joined in 1960; by the time *The Graduate* was encouraging America to laugh at the idea of a future in plastics, he had taken charge of GE's plastics business department. He was part of Jones's inner circle of top managers during most of Jones's tenure. However you want to characterize the changes and decisions Welch made during his 20 years at the top of GE, they stemmed from his background as a consummate insider. And among the many things Welch has *not* changed at GE is the institutional habit of promoting from within: His successor, Jeffrey R. Immelt, is also homegrown.

BUT IMMELT WON'T be able to benefit from the second lesson *Jack* might offer those wishing to emulate Welch's career: Become a CEO in the early '80s. In an era when stock performance has become (for better or for worse) the one true measure of corporate success, it's useful to have begun your tenure as CEO just before the greatest bull-market run of all time.

This run has been driven not just by increased earnings but by a huge change in how much investors are willing to pay for those earnings. In 1981, S&P 500 stocks traded, on average, at nine times earnings, according to Thomson Financial/First Call. Today, the average is nearly 25 times earnings (way above the historic figure of about 15 times earnings). To be sure, GE shares trade well above this, at 38 times earnings (more on this below), but there's no denying that Welch—unlike, say, Jones—ran GE during a period when the winds of investor sentiment blew mightily at the backs of share prices, and that much of his eye-popping share-return performance is attributable to a general sea change in what investors are willing to pay for stocks. Of course, that doesn't change the fact that today GE is the most valuable corporation in the world, measured by stock market capitalization. This, if we can get down to brass tacks, is the core fact of Welch mania: He did better by his shareholders than anyone.

Except that's not true. Yes, the rise of GE shares during Welch's tenure has been awesome. But turn again to this year's Fortune 500. Where does GE rank in annual rate of return to investors over the past decade? Fifty-fifth. A great performance, to be sure, but not in a class by itself. Elsewhere in its 500 issue, *Fortune* notes that, over 17 years, shares of Colgate-Palmolive have decisively outperformed those of GE. (The 17-year time horizon is pegged to the tenure of Colgate-Palmolive's CEO, Reuben Mark, who avoids the press and is not, needless to say, being offered seven-figure book deals.)

But then, there are many yardsticks by which to gauge a company's performance, and raw stock market gains may not be the best. (As noted above, the monumental gains made by stocks in general—the S&P 500 is up roughly 2,000 percent since 1981—distort direct comparisons between stock performances in the last couple of decades and those of pre-'80s CEO tenures.) *Built to Last* employs a better measure of corporate success: It measures the performance of an individual company's stock relative to the market during the same period. The easiest way to express this is as a simple ratio: Collins has calculated that, from 1981 to 1995, shares of Welch's GE stock stomped the broader market by a factor of 2.4 to 1. Surely *that* astonishing run of success is close to unique—something pulled off by only a few similarly celebrated corporate chiefs.

In fact, no. In his forthcoming book, *Good to Great*, Collins finds eleven companies that beat this benchmark. Earlier this year, he wrote about the former CEO of one such firm, Kimberly-Clark, in *Harvard Business Review*. From 1971 to 1991, that company's stock outperformed the market by a ratio of 4.1 to 1 under the leadership of one Darwin E. Smith. "And yet few people—even ardent students of business history—have heard of Darwin Smith," Collins wrote in *HBR*.

SO WHY *IS* Welch routinely described as the greatest corporate leader of his generation, if not of the century? Part of the answer is that, during Welch's career, America's relationship with business leaders has changed. For starters, business in general, filtered through coverage of the stock market on networks like CNBC, receives much more public attention than it did in 1980. Add to this the rise of technology companies, from Microsoft to Apple to Dell, that appeared to come from nowhere on the strength of visionary individuals whose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entrepreneurial achievements were inspiring in a way few political figures could match. Looking to make business accessible in an age of economic boom and innovation, the press frequently told business stories through the prism of individuals—Iacocca, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Welch. In his day, Reg Jones was also lauded by his peers as the nation's most admired and influential CEO. It's just that the wider public wasn't that interested in such things back then.

But there's another explanation as well. Welch has given Wall Street what it wants. And, in the '80s and '90s, what it wanted above all else were companies that delivered results predictably, with no surprises, quarter by quarter. As noted above, GE trades at a distinct and impressive premium to the P/E of other companies. This is something Welch achieved. When he took over, GE was trading at a P/E of eight, roughly in line with the broader market. Typically, a company's P/E shrinks as its revenues and earnings increase; investors get less and less generous in what they're willing to pay for earnings, for the logical reason that percentage gains in earnings growth get tougher to replicate as the numbers get bigger. Nevertheless, GE under Welch has done the opposite: The market is apparently a far greater believer in GE's growth potential now than it was in 1981. That's a neat trick when you consider that today's earnings dwarf those of two decades ago.

One reason the markets may have rewarded Welch's GE with such a generous multiple is that the company has mastered the quarterly earnings ritual with almost eerie efficiency. "Wall Street loves the more than 100 quarters"—it's now 103—"of uninterrupted growth in net income that have occurred under Mr. Welch," *The New York Times* summarized late last year. This isn't strictly accurate, since that string began in 1975, six years before Welch took over. Still, it's an incredible feat to roll out orderly growth from continuing operations on a quarterly basis for that long, through a wide variety of short-term economic twists and turns.

INCREDIBLE MAY BE right. As the Welch era winds down, some critics have suggested that the methods by which GE produces its vaunted quarterly growth numbers may be less than pristine. A persuasive story by Jon Birger in the November 2000 issue of *Money* magazine argued that the company uses "a number of confusing but apparently legal gimmicks to achieve its vaunted consistency." (GE responded by sending a note to its stock analysts labeling *Money*'s article "an unprecedented collection of nonsense.") *Fortune* (arguably Welch's biggest booster) followed up on March 19 with a story called "Accounting in Wonderland." Each wrestled in the thicket of restructuring charges, onetime special gains, and sales and acquisitions.

Observers are particularly suspicious of GE's record of using unique gains and restructuring charges to offset each other without disrupting that quarterly earnings flow. Most recently, charges associated with shutting down the Montgomery Ward chain, which was owned by GE Capital, were offset by a onetime gain from the sale of the last of the firm's stake in PaineWebber. Had these events occurred further apart, they would have ultimately balanced out the same way, but they could have created either a dip in earnings growth or a spike that would have been hard to top the next earnings season. And it does seem curious that GE's many onetime gains, acquisitions, and special charges invariably and smoothly balance each other every three months.

Then there's the company's pension plan. As noted in a 1999 column by Alan Abelson in *Barron's*, echoed in *Money*, GE's pension plan has been fully funded for years; it is invested in stocks and fixed-income securities, and when gains in the fund outpace the amount the company must pay, the difference falls into its reported income. This amount has grown at a faster clip than overall earnings in the last few years, and in 2000 it totaled $1.74 billion, or about 13.7 percent of net. (GE has lately stopped using the phrase "total pension plan income" to describe this figure, instead labeling it "cost reduction from pension" in its latest annual report; but it's the same thing.) The point is that this number has nothing to do with GE's actual businesses, but it helps the company meet its aggressive revenue-growth targets each quarter.

Of course, corporate accounting can get extremely creative without running afoul of the law—or even running afoul of good business practices—and no one has suggested that whatever gimmickry may be going on masks a flawed business. The danger is in letting the short-term mania to "make the quarter" undermine the balance sheet's long-term health. There's no evidence that it has so far, but such things take a long time to play out.

CHANCES ARE THAT GE will remain healthy under Immelt—again, because it is a business with executive talent both deep and wide. What's less clear is whether the intangible optimism, tied to Welch's mystique, that has helped inflate the growth of GE stock can hold out. It will take years, for instance, to figure out whether Welch's last act, the mega-acquisition of Honeywell, will play out as planned. If the integration process hits a speed bump—if, God forbid, something interferes with that quarterly earnings streak—that good-vibrations optimism could disappear.

Although the rockiness of the market has left GE shares essentially flat over the past 18 months, they are still generously priced. If this generosity deteriorates even mildly—say GE's growth slows a bit—it will severely affect GE shares. Suppose the stock's P/E enjoyed merely a 10 percent premium over the market's current (historically high) average. That would knock about 29 percent off GE's current share price—or wipe out a whopping $142 billion of the company's overall value. Such are the perils of a stock priced to reflect a belief in managerial perfection. Even now, GE shares are about 19 percent off their 52-week high, not because of weaker earnings, but because investors aren't willing to pay as much for those earnings as they used to. If Welch picked the perfect time to take control of a company whose success would be measured by shareholder value, Immelt may have picked the worst.

On the cover of *Jack*, Welch wears a friendly grin, a cream-colored sweater, and the look of a man who figures his record speaks for itself. He is ready to talk from the gut, to explain his success, to share his secrets. Some of them, anyway. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Looking Back

On December 7, 1941, I was at the movies. I forget the picture, but it was at the Radio City Music Hall. Downstairs in the palatial lounge they had a news ticker, continuously printing bulletins on paper that kept rolling. After the film I went down to the lounge for the usual reason, then read on the news ticker that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. (It was the first time I had heard of the place.) My first thought was that Japan must be crazy. Such a tiny country attacking such a big one.

Since then Pearl Harbor has been in the movies—most notably in *From Here to Eternity* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Now arrives, preceded by a wee touch of publicity, **Pearl Harbor** (Buena Vista), a film that probably cost as much as any of the battleships destroyed in the murderous disaster. There are: a director, Michael Bay; a screenplay, by Randall Wallace; three principal actors, Ben Affleck, Josh Hartnett, and Kate Beckinsale; and there are three hours and two minutes of film, including forty minutes of the attack itself. Also, as upbeat coda, there is the U.S. bombing raid on Tokyo in 1942. This film, for all its bulk, is hardly worth comment as a film; already its factual errors and omissions have been sharply scored. (For instance, Japan's motives are skimped, and Japanese actions in China during the 1930s are unmentioned, apparently in obeisance to potential Japanese filmgoers.) More interesting than anything intrinsic in the film are two instances of tradition.

First, a film tradition. The traditional action picture, which *Pearl Harbor* essentially is, begins production with the climactic action idea—a famous battle or a titanic natural catastrophe or whatever. Then, after the action is planned, the producers hire people to concoct a story in which to place the action, like the Styrofoam surrounding a precious object in a crate. Clearly that is what happened with this new film, because the story is so stale, so predictable, so typical of the Styrofoam package (two servicemen who are rivals for a nurse's affection) that it seems particularly crummy before and after the excellent—and terrifying—battle sequences. In fact, the first glimpse of the nurse, in a group of equally attractive nurses, suggests a chorus line, as if the picture might turn into a musical. During the story sequences, the film almost winks at us, as if implying, "Forgive this stuff, folks. You know this kind of picture. We had to have some sort of story so that we could bring you the big bangs."

Second, more serious, is the tradition of martial atmosphere. Ever since Vietnam, most notable war films have had a gritty quality, an intent of candor. *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Platoon* and *Hamburger Hill* are instances, and even *Saving Private Ryan*, which for all its tricky plotting and final mush was hardly a recruiting poster. But the tenor of *Pearl Harbor* harks back to the pictures made during World War II and shortly thereafter, which were, quite understandably, gung ho. Few of us would have wanted anything else at the time. Now, however, here is a picture that is ultimately a guts-and-glory rouser. A young John Wayne, with all that Wayne's presence implied and demanded, could have stepped into the Affleck role. Media commentators tell us that Generation X is now in control of the box office and that this film was tooled to please them, like the slaughterous video games on which they grew up. Never mind games: long before video, kids liked war games. *Pearl Harbor* strikes deeper than games, to the tingle of national aggression. Does this mean that, since most contemporaries of World War II have passed on, the new generation-in-power is feeling a martial itch?

Any film on this subject had to be true to the feelings of the hour, which were fierce; but the Movieland phoniness of the characters and story in this film compel the viewer to look not for the truth of that hour but for the schemings of today.

A Czech film, **Divided We Fall** (Sony Pictures Classics), is another throwback, though of a quite different kind and quality. It deals with problems of survival for Czechs, Gentile and Jewish, during the German occupation. In theme and ambience, it is the sort of Middle European film that was produced in the 1960s—*The Shop on Main Street*, for example. I don't know enough about Czech film to say that there have been few such pictures made in that country in the last thirty years; but to an American viewer, *Divided We Fall* seems almost like a 1960s picture that took a long time to get here—which it is not. It was made last year.

Petr Jarchovský, the screenwriter, says that first he wrote the screenplay and failed to sell it, so he made a novel of it, which was published and purchased for the screen. He had the screenplay ready. He has long collaborated on various film and television projects with the director Jan Hřebejk, and together—which is how they want us to think of it—they made *Divided We Fall*.

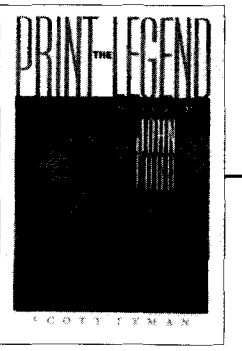
As the opening credits plink onto the screen, we see three short episodes—1936, 1939, 1943—in the lives of a prosperous small-town Jewish family, who are sequentially evicted from their villa and carted away (literally) to Theresienstadt. The chief setting thereafter is the modest apartment of a thirtyish Gentile couple, Josef and Marie, who are childless. (Notice their names and the fact that a picture of the Madonna and Child hangs on their wall.) Their sterility is noted in the neighborhood because it makes them exceptions. Suddenly David, a member of the family we saw at the start, appears at their apartment, hoping for help because Josef was an employee of his father. David has escaped from a camp by bribing a guard, and he begs them for shelter. The risk is not only to Josef and Marie but to the whole street: the Germans execute all the inhabitants of a block in which a Jew has been hidden. Josef wants to send David away, but Marie differs, and prevails. They hide David in the (empty) room they had saved for their children, as it turns out, for several years. Through many of these scenes there winds a slender thread of poignant music, written by Aleš Březina.

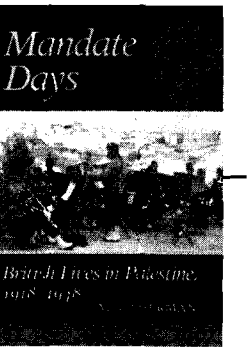
A frequent visitor to the apartment is Horst, who also was an employee of the deported Jewish family, but Josef was his superior. Horst is now a minor official under the Germans, and he enters, swastika in his lapel, with friendly officiousness and with gifts such as coffee. Quickly we see that, despite his wife and children, Horst is sniffing after Marie. Josef is soon aware of this but is chary of protesting the visits because Horst might make trouble for them, including a search of the apartment.

After some time Josef goes for a fertility test and is told that he is sterile. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW PAPERBACKS





Tet!
The Turning Point in the Vietnam War
Don Oberdorfer

"A valuable addition to the history of our purgatory . . . The reporting is bull's-eye accurate." —Walter Cronkite

$18.95 paperback

Mandate Days
British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948
A. J. Sherman

"With an engaging writing style and a superb eye for the telling quotation, Sherman conveys the unraveling of the British Mandate with flair and understanding."—Jon B. Alterman, *Middle East Journal*

$17.95 paperback

Presidential Decisions for War
Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf
Gary R. Hess

"Hess gives a fine sense of how various pressures operated to shape both a president's decision for war and the way in which the decision was carried out."—David W. Levy, University of Oklahoma

$17.95 paperback

Congress and the People
Deliberative Democracy on Trial
Donald R. Wolfensberger

"This book contains the best and finest understanding of Congressional behavior I know and makes anew—and in the context of current political issues and means of communication—our founders' case for deliberative, representative democracy."—Anthony C. Beilenson, former U.S. Representative from California

Woodrow Wilson Center Press

$19.95 paperback

A Heiner Müller Reader
Plays, Poetry, Prose
Heiner Müller
edited and translated by Carl Weber
foreword by Tony Kushner

"In [Müller's] writings you will find that which is repellant, unfathomable, false, and absurd. You will, in short, find our times, recorded more unflinchingly than almost anywhere else." —Tony Kushner

PAJ Books: Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta, Series Editors

$19.95 paperback

Print the Legend
The Life and Times of John Ford
Scott Eyman

"Eyman has emerged as one of the most distinguished and reliable of popular film historians."—Robert Sklar, *Washington Post Book World*

$22.50 paperback

The Book of Lamentations
A Meditation and Translation
David R. Slavitt

"An extended meditation on the tragic aspect of Jewish history, culminating in a translation of the original *Lamentations*." —Raymond P. Scheindlin, The Jewish Theological Seminary

$15.95 paperback

DramaContemporary: India
edited by Erin B. Mee

"This important anthology presents key works by some of India's leading playwrights—artists who fuse modernity with tradition."—Richard Schechner, New York University

PAJ Books: Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta, Series Editors

$22.50 paperback

A Clever Base-Ballist
The Life and Times of John Montgomery Ward
Bryan Di Salvatore

"More than a biography, *A Clever Base-Ballist* is a social history of a slice of late-19th-century America."—Bob Minzesheimer, *USA Today*

$18.95 paperback

The Technology of Orgasm
"Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction
Rachel P. Maines

Winner of the American Historical Association's Herbert Feis Prize

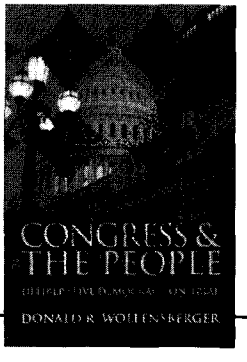
"In her exemplary historical analysis of the machines that go bump and grind in the night, Maines uncovers more than a mundane evolution of technology. After explaining how she came to take the vibrator seriously, she makes an excellent case why everyone else should, too."—Elizabeth Millard, *In These Times*

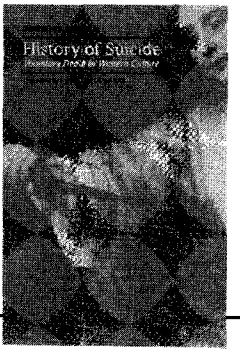
$14.95 paperback

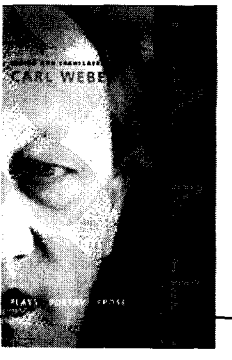
History of Suicide
Voluntary Death in Western Culture
Georges Minois
translated by Lydia G. Cochrane

"Gory anecdotes and effective reference to overarching intellectual trends make the book edifying and morbidly enjoyable."—*Kirkus Reviews*

$18.95 paperback







The Johns Hopkins University Press • 1-800-537-5487 • www.jhupbooks.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Marie then learn that the only way they can keep their apartment, which the authorities want to take, and prevent David from being discovered, is to claim that Marie is pregnant. How this problem is solved—a very secular solution of the Gospel parallel for Josef and Marie—and the results thereof make the final sequences of the picture. Here the story gets plotty; things happen just in time to prevent worse things from happening, and, as the war ends, the replacement of German oppression by Soviet oppression brings a different set of problems. The last fifteen minutes or so of this gripping two-hour film are unworthy of it. The grave situation throughout doesn't necessarily mandate a grueling finish—after all, there were survivors—but the coda implies suggestions from production people in control.

Hřebejk directs with a sure hand and a warm heart, and with some pictorial touches reminiscent of the so-called "Prague Spring" in Czech films of the 1960s. Boleslav Polívka gives Josef instant credibility as a worn, honest man; Anna Šišková gives Marie a quiet strength out of which her occasional outbursts grow naturally. The most subtle performance comes from Jaroslav Dušek as Horst, creating a complex texture of newfound arrogance and basic guilt, expressed in enforced amiability. From time to time the cinematographer, Jan Malíř, uses swift and blurry shooting to heighten the anxiety and fear. It works. ■

Mindy Aloff on Dance
Spitballs at Euclid

NO CHOREOGRAPHER AT the ballet in the past quarter of a century has worked to become a classicist more diligently, more pugnaciously, in more painstaking detail, and with more energy and optimism than Twyla Tharp. Tharp's efforts for ballet companies—that is, for dancers who perform her dances as part of a larger, classically based repertoire—have been presentation pieces for this ongoing mission. They tend to be storyless and also grandly scaled, with large casts that point up the company hierarchy (stars, soloists, and corps), and to observe punctiliously the fundamentals of classical dancing (such as passing through basic positions between poses). With some exceptions, moreover, Tharp chooses to stage classical music for full orchestra, with emphasis on the grand traditions of Germany and Vienna. Often she seems to be investigating the nature of classicism in music itself. Unexpectedly, those investigations of classical form are undertaken via composers broadly associated with Romanticism, most notably (and ambitiously) Beethoven. Short of trying to reveal the element of Bach in Chopin, this is about the most difficult way to do it.

Tharp's aspirations could not be more unpredictable, or more encompassing. But her ballets are also very restless, and they can look quite diffuse—in dancer lingo, "all over the place." They continually challenge the association of classical ballet with structural symmetry. They continually attempt to re-invent partnering technique without regard for the aristocratic decorum that is so deeply a part of classical partnering. They persist in throwing spitballs at Euclid through their interpolations of flexed feet or pelvic movements derived from jazz—often so fleeting that one cannot appreciate their logic in context.

Tharp's ballets are rarely calm or still; they hardly ever provide one with the space or the time to absorb them. The principals are often placed off-center, or even far upstage, thereby undercutting their centrality; and the corps is often used as if they were a chorus, as voices in a cantata, with masses of people swept on or off in a couple of counts. The result is that the ballets can be difficult to take in, to remember, to understand, and even to connect with emotionally in only one or two viewings. Nor are Tharp's costume designers much help for the onetime viewer who tries to bring what looks like diffusion into sharp focus. The silhouettes are soft, sometimes with wafting pieces of fabric that move on their own counts, which further confuse the eye; and neither silhouettes nor colors clearly distinguish the soloists from the corps.

I have been hearing a lot of complaining about Tharp's recent work. I can see what the criticisms are, though I do not share the conclusion that the pieces are finally overwhelmed by their problems. Tharp certainly trips herself up sometimes—with such a density of movement on stage it is almost inevitable that she would; but she approaches ballet very seriously, and her flaws are more interesting than most of her colleagues' achievements. Her choreography is vital and musically intelligent, her vision of the stage as an arena of forces is huge, her highs are thrilling, and her ballets exhibit a fierce belief in classicism as a living potency, something that is relevant to the accelerated, almost manic disorder of contemporary life. She is also a ballet democrat: her works on point consist of passionate assaults on symmetry and hierarchy; and in making those values into issues, Tharp acknowledges that they are central to the very identity of classical ballet. And her personal responses to music invariably lead one into the scores, whether one is with her or against her about the way in which she reads them. The music becomes curiously active in the presence of her choreography, even when the marriage is not especially harmonious.

IN PART, THIS is owed to the unorthodox ideas that Tharp holds about how the music should sound. When *The Beethoven Seventh*, her staging of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, was given its premiere at the New York City Ballet last year, she brought in the conductor George Cleve, a specialist in Mozart, who made the symphony seem positively frisky (compared with, say, the intense sobriety of Karajan's reading, which would be the standard that many in the audience would bring into the theater). I saw the ballet five times, and I found it to be noble as well as idiosyncratic: it attempts to make Beethoven sexy, among other things, which certainly clears away a few of the cobwebs and the halos that clutter his reception. Tharp's profane and demythologizing way with these musical scriptures is very refreshing. I will never hear the Seventh again without picturing her tragic interpretation of its Allegretto, the second movement, which she sets as a valedictory nocturne for a shirtless Nikolaj Hübbe, who, profoundly entwined with the eternal feminine of Wendy Whelan, loses her twice, the last time for good.

At the premiere of *The Beethoven Seventh*, objections were raised that the movement looked derivative of the second movement of Balanchine's *Scotch Symphony* (set to Mendelssohn's Third Symphony), in which a man also loses the ballerina twice, and by the same physical mechanics (she is borne off from him by four male fate-figures). Tharp may indeed have been thinking of the Balanchine work, but surely the important point is that the context and the meaning that she creates in *The Beethoven Seventh* are radically different in their tone. Balanchine was addressing the ebb and flow of love in

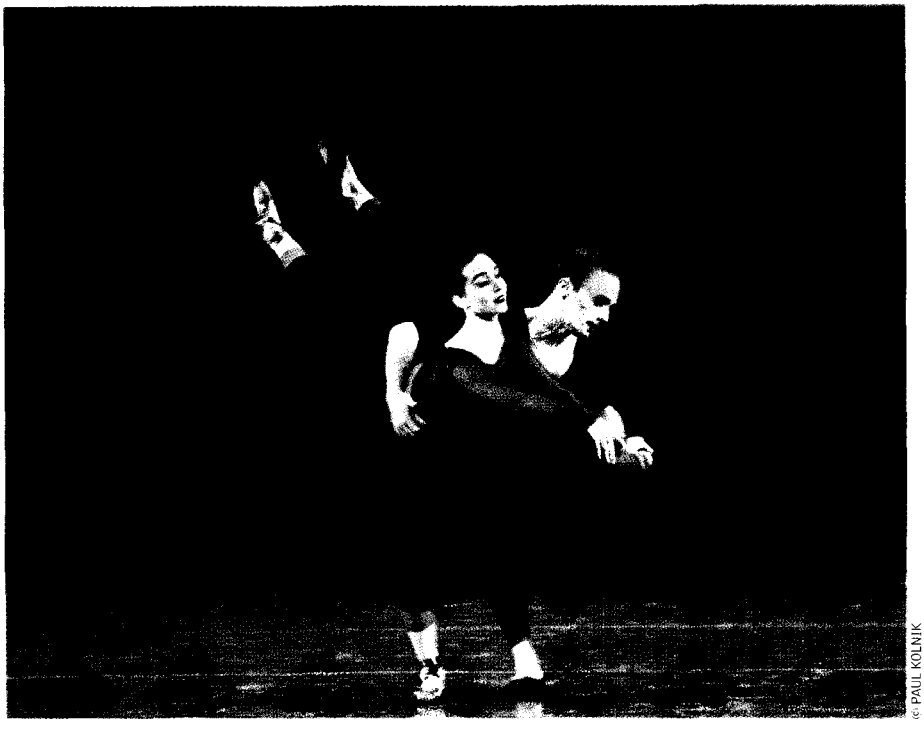
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a culture of strict propriety and social convention. His *Scotch* is set outdoors, in a craggy, neon-pink landscape, where the sun is still in the sky, and the ballet ends festively.

The Beethoven Seventh, by contrast, is not festive; it is antic. Even its wittiest moments seem to take place in a world of perpetual night, whose featureless interiors are illuminated from within (with the help of Jennifer Tipton's virtuoso lighting), and where the joys of life are for the most part continuously interrupted or veiled (like the glimpses of color in Santo Loquasto's layered tights, leotards, and rehearsal skirts). The *pas de deux* in the Allegretto establishes a private clearing in which individuals communicate openly and intimately, sometimes with one another, sometimes with forces beyond their control. Even when Whelan has briefly left the stage, Hübbe's figure is in conversation with the symphony itself, which Tharp presents as something palpable, with a will of its own. (At one point he is pointedly thrown off balance during a pirouette by a musical passage, which "hits" him in the head.)

It is not clear whether Tharp intended resonances between her choreography and the composer's biography; but the figures in the Allegretto do suggest certain hardships that Beethoven suffered around the time of the Seventh Symphony's completion, in 1812. It was in 1812 that Beethoven fell deeply and impossibly in love with the woman whom he called, in his sole surviving letter to her, "Immortal Beloved." And there was another profound loss: by 1812, as Maynard Solomon has observed, Beethoven's deafness had begun to worsen dramatically. For a fanciful member of the audience, then, the figure that Whelan dances can be seen to represent a significant portion of the composer's emotional world, in life and in art. Regardless of whether this dimension is part of your viewing, though, the Allegretto is the heart of the ballet, owing to its heightened intimacy and its tragic character. Tharp's balletic dramatization of the composer's two moments of loss lingers long in the mind.

For those who are led to make dramatic connections, there are many more Beethovens in *The Beethoven Seventh* than the tragic one. There is the jester of the opening, danced by Tom Gold: this is the Beethoven who wrote the finger-breaking piano charmer "Rage Over a Lost Penny." There is Beethoven the enchanter, a deeply Mozartean figure, danced by Peter Boal, who tosses off eleven pirouettes from a single preparation, who hypnotizes his partner (Jenifer Ringer) at a whim, who inspires lighthearted ballroom dancing throughout the society he occupies. And there is Beethoven the daredevil (Damian Woetzel), hurtling through *rivoltades*, plunging into somersaults, and unspooling a blur of *chaîné* turns, complicated by tricky changes of position for the arms, as his Muse (Miranda Weese) practically melts into air. The ballet is a plenitude of riches.



© PAUL KOLNIK

Jenifer Ringer and Peter Boal in "The Beethoven Seventh" at the New York City Ballet

And it has all the disadvantages of a plenitude. It is not easily appreciated, especially as it has been presented by this particular company in this particular theater. The choreography, for eighteen dancers, is intricate and demanding, and one suspects that its maintenance would require considerable rehearsal time, which the New York City Ballet famously lacks. The choreography also showcases the men in its cast more emphatically than the women; and while this might be appropriate to Beethoven, it is off-putting to members of the audience who have noted a decline in the strength and the puissance of the company's ballerinas over the past decade. Even though the role that Tharp fashioned for Whelan is one of the most flattering and sensitive roles that Whelan has ever been given, the parts for Ringer and Weese make them look generic.

There have also been objections that Balanchine was supposed to have considered Beethoven's music unsuitable for staging because it was complete in itself and did not need a further theatrical dimension—that Tharp was behaving sacrilegiously in *The Beethoven Seventh* not toward Beethoven but toward Balanchine. People who feel this way are not susceptible to the arguments that both Isadora Duncan and Léonide Massine staged the Seventh Symphony, or that Wagner was so taken with its propulsive character that he termed it "the apotheosis of the dance," or that Balanchine actually worked with Beethoven scores three times early in his career, including themes from the Seventh, in the Broadway musical *Dream With Music*.

And they may have something of a point. The Seventh Symphony comes down to us as a warhorse of the concert hall, and although it is certainly the warhorse I would want to ride into battle, it arrives armored with nearly two centuries of received opinion and expectation. It is so clear and so direct: why complicate the stage picture? It obviously depicts peasant celebrations: why stage it on pointe? Its themes are boldly and consistently developed: why have so many principal couples and so many corps? Tharp has spoken publicly on a number of occasions about her perspective on Beethoven—that his effects of clarity and boldness are the results of extremely subtle rhythmic patterns. About the music itself, these explanations are persuasive; but the ballet on its own does not quite make its case for someone who is not sensitive to Tharp's musicological concerns, or whose musical reading of Beethoven is not open to a counter-reading, or whose experience of ballet is almost entirely visual. (That describes most of every ballet audience, including the City Ballet's.) Tharp's high-minded view of the audience as a collection of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

students, with the time and the inclination to ponder complex material and unfamiliar approaches over more than one evening, may have been a mistake. At today's ticket prices, only a dance critic would, or could, attend one work five times.

THE BEETHOVEN SEVENTH is Tharp's second ballet for the New York City Ballet. Her first, *Brahms/Handel*, set to Brahms's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel," was made in 1984 in collaboration with Jerome Robbins, and it was wildly popular not only for the novelty of the collaboration, but also for the actual achievement. Many of the objections to *The Beethoven Seventh* disappear in the case of *Brahms/Handel*. Thanks to the contributions of Robbins, it contained orderly stage pictures, instantly legible to the eye, and choreography with breathing space. And it provided marvelous showcases for its ballerinas (Merrill Ashley and Maria Calegari).

Moreover, the theme-and-variations form, which Balanchine used so often and so happily, was a grateful choice here as well. Commissioned ballet music is traditionally made up of short numbers for dancing, intermixed with longer, anecdotal scenes, or *pas d'action*, for storytelling and mime. The reason for this is physical: full-out dancing takes its toll on the stamina of practitioners after about five or six minutes. In the century just past, choreographers tested the limits of that stamina, but these experiments for selected individuals are still exceptions that prove the rule, particularly in large companies, where a ballet might have several casts. In searching for music from the concert hall that was not especially composed for ballet, choreographers must be attentive to the possibilities that it offers for sectioning. Balanchine was a master at such discoveries.

Within months of her Beethoven work for City Ballet, Tharp had made a companion ballet for American Ballet Theatre, called *The Brahms-Haydn Variations*. It was originally titled *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, after Brahms's orchestral score, which was the most popular work that he ever composed. This ballet, too, is monumentally proportioned: three principal couples, four soloist couples, and eight corps de ballet couples. Although a number of the dancers for whom it was made had been felled by injury and illness by the time of the world premiere in Washington, D.C., and still more were out of commission at the New York premiere during the company's City Center season last fall, the substitutes were excellent. *Brahms-Haydn* received a standing ovation at its Kennedy Center premiere, and its reception among New York audiences has been very strong.

Once again, observers with substantial experience in the theater were provoked to remark that the choreography looks "all over the place." But this time I really cannot see the piece the way its critics do. *The Brahms-Haydn Variations* strikes me as a magnificent achievement, perhaps the finest example of craftsmanship that Tharp has ever put on a ballet stage. It is certainly not what Balanchine, or Robbins, or Massine would have made to the music; and it has no bloodlines leading back to Petipa at all. Tharp's penchant for visual complication, for sudden exits and entrances of a massed corps, for subdividing what would normally be a role for two stars into roles for six or eight, for giving long-distance views of the principals upstage at some moments—all this business is still in place. From the wings, the action may look like mayhem. Once the dancers are in position, however, Tharp obtains fascinating scenic results from the house: animated landscapes, with figures moving along planes layered from downstage to upstage to create a kind of stereoscopic depth. (The choreographer seems to be an heir of Eisenstein.) Meanwhile, the choreography is also layering the relationship between the dance and the music. A handful of motifs derived from elements of the classical lexicon (*développé, renversé*) are subjected to changes wrung on classical procedures (*promenade, grand tour*) in a complexly devised plotting of the strong and weak beats of the musical rhetoric.

Appropriately to a theme and variations, these various elements are repeated, but never quite exactly. And yet the repetitions also gradually build up a subliminal anticipation of a great climax, in which everything is brought together, so that when the musical spirits soar, the dance soars as well. Amazingly for Tharp, whose ballets are not noted for directly satisfying such anticipations, this one does: with an image of a kind of shimmering cathedral of flying lifts and spiraling motion for all thirty dancers to the exultant final return of the theme, the St. Anthony Chorale (probably not composed by Haydn, incidentally), which seems to animate every molecule of air under the proscenium arch. In accord with Brahms, who concludes the piece with a quieter musical postscript that turns down the flame, Tharp's choreography thins out the massed ranks and brings back the remaining dancers from the world of ideals to that of clock time with a little social dancing.

Brahms-Haydn presents an even larger society than *The Beethoven Seventh*, but this world—again with the assistance of Tipton's lighting—has sunny days as well as velvety nights (in the braided *pas de deux* for Paloma Herrera and her partner, a role danced at one Met performance with great tenderness by Giuseppe Picone, for whom the man's part had been created). And there are many passages of real joy along the way to the climactic finale, as well as space-clearing moments, such as a calm male solo early on. The various principal couples are each given some moments alone with each other downstage, which helps to establish their personae for the audience: the flirtatious *pas de deux* for Julie Kent and Angel Corella, whose risky partnering is a poem to underlying mutual trust, is particularly delicate in the off-rhymes of its gestures and steps. And for the first time, at least in my knowledge of her work, Tharp acknowledges the music's emotional character directly.

BRAHMS-HAYDN BEGINS when a man lifts a woman as her leg extends before her, in a gesture whose final flourish meets the first note that Brahms sounds. The union has the effect of a prospector striking oil, and throughout the ballet the music is probed for connection; the finale is practically a field of gushers. Once again the frivolous observer might be led to wonder how many of the men could be identified with Brahms, who never married but enjoyed a number of flirtations. Surely the biographical element that really matters here, though, is that Brahms disappeared into his music. He hoarded the depths of his personality in art and also in life, even from his closest friends. (In 1880, Clara Schumann was reported to have said of him: "To me he is as much a riddle—I might almost say as much a stranger—as he was twenty-five years ago.") Tharp's ballet acknowledges this aspect. Unlike *The Beethoven Seventh*, this work has no vulnerable analogue to that for Beethoven's Allegretto. Even the *pas de deux* for Herrera and Picone, with its sensual entanglements, is presented objectively. *The Beethoven Seventh* is a brave work; *The Brahms-Haydn Variations* is a mastered one.

Tharp's Brahms ballet is her eleventh for ABT. I have seen the company perform all of them at the Met, and also some of them at City Center and at the Kennedy Center in Washington. With the exception of *Push Comes to Shove* in the years when Baryshnikov was dancing it, Tharp's ballets are not especially well served at the Met. Even if one sits downstairs, one is often too far from the stage to take in the detail on which Tharp's choreography depends for its effect. The house is simply too vast. Everything smooshes together; energy translates to flailing, and stage pictures disappear into the colossal cyc. Balanchine's also look

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lackluster in this pharaonic space.

In the case of *Brahms-Haydn*, the sun tones of the lovely, elegant costumes (again by Loquasto) just seem to melt together. Choreography tends to vanish here; as far as dancing is concerned, only extraordinary performances project. It is positively injurious to a ballet such as *The Brahms-Haydn Variations*, unquestionably constructed to close an evening, to put it first on a program, as ABT programmed it during its recent season. The reasons for doing so are surely logistical and economic. These days ABT's Met seasons are built around evening-length story ballets, which sell tickets.

This season, for example, there are only two mixed bills of shorter works: one for three ballets by modern dance choreographers at the ballet—Twyla Tharp, Paul Taylor, Mark Morris—and one, containing mostly excerpts, of ballets using music by Tchaikovsky. The Taylor work was a New York premiere, and the Morris work was a world premiere: premieres, traditionally, do not open programs, because the daily reviewers might be late to the show and miss the news of the evening. But the real problem is the very concept of bunching the works together in the first place, rather than spreading them out, each surrounded by older repertory. Theme programs of this sort, which usually look better on paper than they do in the theater, serve the purposes of marketing, like many of the theme programs at the New York City Ballet.

A dance fan can sympathize with these companies, which have to collect revenue from houses of three thousand or four thousand seats. Marketing is a necessary business. Yet it is not the marketing department that is doing the dancing. On many evenings, I suspect, not even the company's top brass is sitting through the performances that it has programmed. What an audience is taught when *Brahms-Haydn* is put first on a program, or gobbets of Tchaikovsky ballets are served as slice-and-dice appetizers, as they were at the ABT gala, is that integrity, in choreography or in music, does not much matter. I understand, of course, that integrity does not pay the bills. Still, there must be something more that can be done than sighing, as the companies do, or kvetching that the entire system is out of whack, as I do here. ■

Clearances

By JAMES WOOD

Island: The Complete Stories by Alistair MacLeod

(W.W. Norton, 434 pp., $25.95)

A MYSTERY, A glow of unrecognizability, hangs over the work of Alistair MacLeod. A Canadian in his mid-sixties from Cape Breton, the nakedest finger of the Nova Scotia peninsula, he has been writing stories since at least 1968, with patient intermittence; only sixteen are collected in this book. That he is still widely unknown in the United States may have less to do with his reticence than with the source of his eloquence: Cape Breton, where his stories are rooted, an area remote geographically and culturally, where—to judge from MacLeod's fiction—the heirs of Scottish and Irish immigrants continue to work the land and the sea (mining, fishing, farming), frail participants in Canadian modernity, isolate, conservative, past-haunted, many preserving into recent times the Gaelic language and songs of their forbears. Eager to illuminate this ancestral rock, MacLeod has less in common with his North American coevals than with certain Scottish modern writers, such as the Orcadian George Mackay Brown, and the great Gaelic poet from the Isle of Skye, Sorley MacLean.

That this vision of Cape Breton—tending towards a strong monumentalism, strikingly uncomic and rather stonily noble, held in a graven, dignified prose that has put some readers in mind of Steinbeck—should be the only presentation of this world to be found in MacLeod's stories may alert us to a certain simplicity, even sentimentalism, in this often distinguished writer. MacLeod is reverently called a "true" writer or a "real" writer (with comparisons to Lawrence and Hardy in their most pastoral moods) by readers who may be merely crediting the undeniable permanence and "truth" of the people whom he describes and creates, their long tenacity, the pre-modern, steady, seasonal rhythms of their lives.

What is certain is that MacLeod's stories are as far as could be from the contemporary American norm, and this distance has doubtless clouded their recognizability. At present, the American short story is available in two apparently opposed modes—the quiet Carveresque and the noisy postmodern—which are actually holding friendly hands with each other behind their backs. The simple, traditional Carveresque story offers itself as a kind of victim of its own confusion, in which the narrator seems capable of no more than a fragment of incomprehension, a mere tuft of narration: this is what happened, the writer seems to say, but don't ask me to work it out. The impulse is the logical, if rotten, fruit of naturalism—or rather, of naturalism as it was transmuted by Flaubertian aestheticism. It is naturalistic in its egalitarian assumption that the writer is no more expert or subtle at working out reality than the reader; that we are all in this together and must blunder in communal democratic blindness. And it is a species of aestheticism in its assumption that the fragment presented is in itself beautiful enough to exist only in its abbreviated and uncomprehended state. It is as if the writer were saying: this is what happened, and it is so lovely that you should not need to ask me to understand it. Thus most of these kinds of short stories are shaped around an unexplained symbolic image or action.

The Carveresque story is often written in an English that at first glance seems a highly pressurized minimalism, but on deeper study reveals itself to be a mere babyish or busted English of thoughtless simplicity. In its refusal to take much note of place, history, or society, this story seems—like its characters—the victim of sensory deprivation. Its characters invariably speak to each other, if they are into conversation at all, in stringy glazed abruptnesses. Their conversation, in its complacent discontinuity, sounds as if each participant were on the phone speaking to a third party. If these characters have pasts at all, they are thinly offered. Instead they seem oddly stunned by the present, de-seeded and without the pith of affect. We do not see them change much in the Carveresque story; instead these stories photograph their stasis.

The noisy postmodern story, by contrast, is less a fragment than a scattering. It seems to be the opposite of the Carveresque story, and certainly sees itself as such. It is often long, richly and abundantly written, careless about form or controlling symbols, prosperous with information and facts and modern social data. It seems to carry neither the democratic assumptions nor the buried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aestheticism of the Carveresque story. Often the writer is before us, showing a lot of plumage, and being distinctly cleverer and brighter and better informed than we feel ourselves to be. These stories are usually dominated by voice—either the writer's or a vivid narrator's.

Yet both modes of storytelling, in truth, assume that confusion is the modern burden, and that it must overpower literature. Thus both kinds of story are nowadays generally narrated in the first person, because third-person omniscience is feared for its antique wholeness. Third-person omniscience seems impossible, a bill sent from an official ghost. Yet if the Carveresque story trembles before its own confusion, the postmodern story greedily embodies it, overwhelming us with zany happenings and lurching italics and oral luridity. If the Carveresque story presents itself as the victim of its own confusion, the postmodern story presents itself *as* the confusion; but neither is bold enough to announce a comprehension of it. And the postmodern story, for all its volume, is often set—see Rick Moody's writing—in a kind of polar region of frozen communication in which, as in the Carveresque story, people speak to each other in torn and ruined utterances, incapable of meaningful communication. In this sense, there is no real difference between the noise of *Pulp Fiction* and the quieter sounds of *American Beauty*: whether we chatter knowingly about what Big Macs are called in France or silently watch a video of a windblown plastic bag in the suburbs (the controlling image in the latter film), we are coevals in evasion.

ALISTAIR MACLEOD'S STORIES have nothing in common with this kind of American work. His stories, running to twenty or thirty pages, are customarily too long for the major magazines. They are written in an earnest, almost liturgical prose of careful simplicity and frequent beauty, and with a kind of clumsiness and carelessness about cliché that suggests a stern disdain for aestheticism. There is no comedy in MacLeod's stories (perhaps the largest claim against them, robbing his fiction of some crucial vitality), but there is also no fake simplicity, and no knowingness, no zaniness, no "information."

MacLeod is indeed a real writer, but his strengths are inseparable from his weaknesses; the sincerity that produces his sentimentality also stirs his work to a beautifully aroused plainness. Still, the reader who comes without preparation to MacLeod's stories may feel them at first to be melodramatic, a melodrama often secured by the presence of a violent act or an unexpected death, or the revelation of a buried family secret. In "The Road to Rankin's Point," a twenty-six-year-old man, who is dying of cancer, has returned to his grandmother's house in Cape Breton. The story begins with a sumptuous description of the colors and scents of summer on the Cape, but the more extreme coloration of the story's mechanics suddenly threatens to turn everything crimson-hued. We learn that many years ago, when the man's grandmother was a young woman, her husband fell off a cliff and died. On the day the young man returns, the rest of the old woman's large family are also arriving, to persuade her to cease living alone and to move into a home. The grandson silences the rest of his family by announcing that he will stay and live with his grandmother; they know of his sickness, she does not. Satisfied by this solution, the family leaves. That night, the grandson, roused by baying dogs, walks out of the house and finds his grandmother dead on the road at the spot at which her husband died so many years ago.

EVEN HARDY, THE great melodramatist, might have hesitated before handing us these livid coils! But this is the kind of thing described by MacLeod's keenest supporters as having the "primitive" quality of the "ancient English and Scottish ballads." The words are Joyce Carol Oates's, and in an afterword to the Canadian edition of one of MacLeod's volumes Oates writes that "these are tales of ritual-like initiation and sacrifice.... If I were to name a single underlying motive for MacLeod's fiction, I would say that it is the urge to memorialize, the urge to sanctify. This is a sense both primitive and 'modernist' that if one sets down the right words in the right talismanic order, the purely finite and local is transcended and the voiceless is given a voice." And Frederick Busch testifies on the jacket of *Island* that "each story is a rite of passage, crucial to us all, mythical and particular at once ... each story is a tolling, and every word feels true."

Such commendations, written from the best motives, and partly accurate, nevertheless run the risk of condescension, of shrouding an exact judgment of MacLeod's work in a general amnesty, allowed because of the "ancient," ballad-like material. It is true that there is a simple music to MacLeod's work, a music which seems choric and song-like; indeed, his characters often sing the old Gaelic songs. In "The Road to Rankin's Point," the grandmother takes down from the wall "a very old violin [that] came from the Scotland of her ancestors, from the crumbled foundations that now dot Lochaber's shores."

But if this is a music, MacLeod also writes it down, as it were, on modern staved music paper, using ordinary Western notation, and there is no reason for us not to judge it as such, rather than thanking him for bringing us squeaks and grunts from an old "oral tradition." And judging MacLeod's writing in this way, it is hard not to be a little wary of a phrase like "from the Scotland of her ancestors, from the crumbled foundations that now dot Lochaber's shores." Something very large and complicated—an entire emigration—is being too easily compacted here; an atmosphere is being appealed to, somewhat gesturally, in order to soften us up, to put us in the right reverent mood for the recitation to come of the grandmother's old song. And "dot" sounds like the first verb that came into MacLeod's head; it belongs to tourist brochures (along with "razor-sharp claws," the "roiled and angry" sea, "her dark and fearless eyes," "she buries her fingers in my head," or "bone of contention," all found throughout his work, and the entire sentence that comes near the end of the story "The Vastness of the Dark": "And perhaps this man has left footprints on a soul I did not know that I possessed.").

Several of MacLeod's stories have a quality of emotional genre-painting, and display a willingness to let the complexities of character die into stereotype. In many of them, the men are white-haired and silent, strong men of action, and the women dark-haired with sharp tongues. The narrator of "The Boat" describes his mother in ways that seem incredible: "My mother was of the sea, as were all of her people, and her horizons were the very literal ones she scanned with her dark and fearless eyes." She never escapes the prison of this characterization of her, and is presented as angry at her daughters for wasting their time reading books ("In the next world God will see to those who waste their lives reading useless books when they should be about their work," she says at one point). When each of her six daughters marries, none marries a fisherman, and the narrator comments that "my mother never accepted any of the young men, for in her eyes they seemed always a combination of the lazy, the effeminate, the dishonest and the unknown.... And in the end she did not really care, for they were not of her people and they were not of her sea."

Perhaps this stony finality does indeed give "The Boat" a ballad-like quality, but it also lends the story a weakening simplicity. The reader revolts a little: she never accepted any of her sons-in-law, ever? Is this likely? And if MacLeod were to reply that it is simply true, that it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is based on a real mother who really was like this, then the reader is surely entitled to object that this blocky stubbornness is not interesting, that it has no human complexity, that it is a cliché. We deserve a more quizzical and less "sanctifying" account from this woman's literate son.

MacLeod's dialogue is sometimes unreal. In "The Return," a man who was born in the region returns to Cape Breton with his wife and son. Much of the tension of the story is a familiar one, at least to readers of provincial English fiction: the son who went away, married a woman from a more sophisticated area, became a professional (in this case a lawyer), and is now returning to the beloved but now somewhat alien simplicity that produced him. A familiar but distinguished theme—yet alas, MacLeod presses very hard on it. As soon as the son walks into his parents' house, his father, who still works in the mine despite his advanced age, berates him for the infrequency of his visits, and complains that his son is "owned" by his wife: "It seems so far away and we get old so quickly and a man always feels a certain way about his oldest son. I guess in some ways it is a good thing that we do not all go to school. I could never see myself being owned by my woman's family," says the father. Then a page later, the man's mother laments that her lawyer son is "lost to us," and launches a heavy tirade:

> It seems that we can only stay forever if we stay right here. As we have stayed to the seventh generation. Because in the end that is all there is—just staying. I have lost three children at birth but I've raised eight sons. I have one a lawyer and one a doctor who committed suicide, one who died in coal beneath the sea and one who is a drunkard and four who still work the coal like their father and those four are all that I have that stand by me. It is these four that carry their father now that he needs it, and it is these four that carry the drunkard, that dug two days for Andrew's body and that have given me thirty grandchildren in my old age.

To which her son replies, "I know, Ma ... I know that and I appreciate it all, everything. It is just that, well somehow we just can't live in a clan system any more. We have to see beyond ourselves and our own families. We have to live in the twentieth century." To which his mother replies: "Twentieth century?... What is the twentieth century to me if I cannot have my own?"

This passage has little value; it deserves the accompaniment of little finger-violins. It deserves parody: it is parody! It is maudlin, easy, and sneakily propagandistic—with a quality almost of socialist realism. Again, it needs to be said that even if there are granite grannies who speak in this way, the mere existence in reality of such an obelisk does not license her existence in fiction, which supremely exists for the delicate examination of motive. In fiction, this woman is merely an unreal cliché.

And yet it is in this same story that MacLeod writes sentences of limpid beauty. Looking over the bay, the narrator, who is the ten-year-old son of the man who has returned, sees gulls, and thinks: "Overhead the gulls are flying inland, slowly but steadily, as if they are somehow very sure of everything. My grandfather says they always fly inland in the evening. They have done so as long as he can remember." And watching the declining sun fall into the sea, the boy sees that "the sun is moving into the sea as if it is tired and the sea is very blue and very wide—wide enough it seems for a hundred suns." The gulls moving as if somehow very sure of everything—is that not exactly how the measured rowing of gulls strikes us? The sun leaving as if tired—again, a fine image, with both the right "literary" or poetic quality while simultaneously the plausible vision of a ten-year-old boy. This is a kind of distinguished prose that puts

THE NATIONAL INTEREST Summer 2001

America at the Apex
Henry Kissinger

The Balkans: How to Get Out
Richard Betts

Wilson's Belated Triumph
Michael Mandelbaum

Who's Afraid of Mr. Big?
Josef Joffe

Different Drummer, Same Drum
Andrew Bacevich

Natural Rights and Human History
Francis Fukuyama

The Great War: Mystery or Error?
Michael Howard

Britain and the Intellectuals
Ferdinand Mount

Eric Hobsbawm's Eight Lies
Neil McInnes

The Tiananmen Papers
George Walden

THE NATIONAL INTEREST • P.O. Box 622 • Shrub Oak, NY 10588-0622 • (800) 893-8944 • (914) 962-6297
One year (4 issues) for $26. Please add $10 for delivery outside the U.S. and Canada. www.nationalinterest.org NR0601

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one in mind of Chekhov's observation that the best description of the sea that he ever found was in a schoolboy's notebook: "The sea was very large."

As bones sometimes grow stronger after being broken, so there is a sense in which, if MacLeod is sometimes a clumsy or heavy writer, it is only through this clumsiness, this passionate and sincere openness, that something true and fine emerges. A comparison with the poems and songs of Robert Louis Stevenson suggests itself. Doubtless, Stevenson was not a finished or even, at times, an accomplished poet. Yet his broken forms, his willingness to denude himself, to host sentimentality, yield a true music:

> I have trod the upward and the
> downward slope;
> I have endured and done in days before;
> I have longed for all, and bid farewell
> to hope;
> And I have lived and loved, and closed
> the door.

MacLeod's stories have the feel of this simple lyric (I have quoted it in its entirety) by Stevenson. It becomes clear, for instance, that MacLeod's dialogue is not always intended to be "realistic" or even life-like; he is instead striving for a choric and liturgical effect. This is grating at times, and no invocation of Gaelic origins and oral tradition removes that grate, not least because these stories, unlike Stevenson's poems, are not just brief songs, but conventional stories set in actual places, with the usual machinery of verisimilitude and realism familiar to modern fiction in English.

STILL, IT MUST be admitted that there are stories in this book in which the song-like elements, the ballad-like melodramas, do not irritate or simplify, but work together with a prose of considerable sophistication to produce a sediment of complexity worthy of the best modern writing. "The Tuning of Perfection" concerns an old man originally from the Isle of Skye, named Archibald, who has been widowed many years, and who lives on the top of a mountain in Cape Breton. He is known all around as a great singer of the old Gaelic songs, and soon the folklorists and the academics from Toronto and elsewhere come to record his songs, these miraculous extensions of the past which have lived on into the modern age. Eventually, a television company from Halifax announces that it wants to film a family group from Cape Breton singing in Halifax at a festival. A member of the royal family will be in the audience, it is said; the program will be broadcast internationally. It is a great opportunity for those who are selected.

The old man and his family are the obvious favorites; but there is also a tough rival family, led by a toothless, roughened, but cocksure man called Carver, that is also in the running. The television producers arrive in Cape Breton, and put the families through their auditions. They ask Archibald to sing for them. He does, and MacLeod, with fluid grace, reproduces the song, in which the old man seems to be remembering his wife of many years ago:

> Over lofty mountains lies
> The dwelling place of my love,
> One whose heart was always warm,
> And whom I loved too dearly.
>
> And behind the wall of stone
> I would recognize your steps,
> But how sad am I tonight
> Because we're not together.
>
> Still my love you will last
> Like the rock beneath the sea,
> Just as long as will the waves
> That strike against it always.

But it is the Carver family, though very inferior singers, who win the contest to go to Halifax, because of Archibald's cussedness: he refuses to accede to the producers' request that the songs be shortened to televisual length of three minutes. These songs, he insists, must be sung in their stretched entirety, twenty or more verses and all.

Near the end of the story, Carver and friends visit the old man with a gift, boxes of bootlegged liquor. Carver is barely sober; some of his friends are drunk, and Carver has clearly been in some kind of fight. But he has come because he is grateful to the old man for his stubbornness: it has enabled the Carver clan to go to Halifax. Archibald is moved by the inappropriateness of the gift; he is known as the most abstemious man in the area. And as he watches Carver and his friends bring the boxes of drink into the kitchen, he envies them their "closeness and what the producer fellow had called their tremendous energy. And he imagined it was men like them who had given, in their recklessness, all they could think of in that confused and stormy past. Going with their claymores and the misunderstood language of their war cries to 'perform' for the Royal Families of the past. But he was not sure of that either. He smiled at them and gave a small nod of acknowledgement. He did not quite know what to say."

The story is so fine because, although MacLeod dares a little surge of historical sentimentalism—"in that confused and stormy past"—this surge is ballasted by an otherwise complete lack of sentimentality. Carver and his friends are drunk, have been beaten up, and have flourished a ludicrous gift. And yet it is precisely these men who seem to Archibald at this moment to be the embodiments of the heroic Scottish past; and the Scottish past does not seem heroic, but suddenly "confused and stormy." The delicacy with which the story is able to reach a long arm behind itself and to provoke the echoing past is possible in part because the story inverts itself and surprises the reader. Archibald, who would seem to be the heroic, legendary embodiment of the Scottish past, the keeper of dignified memory, proudly reusing modern blandishments, may not be the hero after all; it may be Carver and his clan who most truly embody the past. Needless to say, the beauty of this paradoxical conclusion is a long way from the trite myth-making of the exchanges in "The Return" and "The Boat."

THE BOOK ENDS with another beautiful story, "Clearances," which again enfolds within itself the sentimental and the unsentimental. A Cape Breton man old enough to have fought in World War II, and now widowed, recalls the early years of his happy marriage, and his time during the war. He remembers a visit to the nearby Prince Edward Island, and remembers that he and his wife, unaccustomed to such travel, did not really know what to do once on the island, so "they went to look at Condon's Woollen Mill because it was the name that was most familiar to them.... They did not get out of their car but merely looked at the woollen mill through the haze of the July heat.... Later his wife was to tell friends, 'We visited Condon's Woollen Mill on Prince Edward Island,' as if they had visited a religious shrine or a monument of historical significance and, he thought, she was probably right." Moving around his house, the old man reflects that he still lives in the house built by his grandfather. The upstairs bedrooms were once full of his children, who have since grown up and moved away. "Now there was only himself and his dog, and when he visited the upstairs rooms they seemed like a museum that he had had a hand in creating." This is an exquisite detail, and sets the tone of the story, a gentle, even-tempered lament, not maudlin but softly resigned.

Yet just as we begin to expect the maintenance of this tone, MacLeod relaxes his control, and the tale becomes sentimentally gestural. The old man remembers serving in the Canadian army, remembers taking a week's army leave in Scotland, and speaking Gaelic with a shepherd on the train, and watching from the windows "the stone foundations of a vanished people." In Scotland, he researches his ancestors, wanders through graveyards. There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

follows an uninspiring passage about Scotland:

> Where once people had lived in their hundreds and their thousands, there now stretched only the unpopulated emptiness of the vast estates with their sheep-covered hills or the islands which had become bird sanctuaries or shooting ranges for the well-to-do. He saw himself as the descendant of victims of history and changing economic times, betrayed, perhaps, by politics and poverty as well.
>
> In the evenings around the hospitable whisky bottle he tried to explain the landscape of Cape Breton.

Here MacLeod has fallen again into striped brochure prose—this is a rather banal description of the Scottish Highlands ("shooting ranges for the well-to-do") complete with a comfy evocation of "the hospitable whisky bottle."

Yet the story recovers. Still busy with his memories, the man goes outside, and stands looking at a portion of his Cape Breton field, and reflects that "the spruce trees had been there and had been cleared and now they were back again. They went and came something like the tide, he thought, although he knew his analogy was incorrect." This is lovely, for by admitting that the old man may clumsily have procured the wrong analogy, MacLeod enables it beautifully to become the right analogy, because it is right for this man. MacLeod gently suggests, without too deep a thematic impress, the links between the original Highland Clearances, in which crofters were driven by the English soldiers from their land, many of them emigrating to America and Canada, and the less eventful but more unavoidable and ceaseless clearance of land in order for it to be habitable.

Again, as at the end of "The Tuning of Perfection," MacLeod is able to activate the past, to make it surely ring, by a most delicate retrieval. And this fineness passes through patches of crudity, like a dirty river cleansing itself by sheer force of motion. At such moments, and in such remarkable stories, Alistair MacLeod becomes a writer far removed not only from the contemporary North American noise, but also from the ballad tradition in which some of his readers wrongly want to place him. He becomes only himself, provokingly singular and rare, an island of richness. ■

Lambs Into Lions

By PAULA FREDRIKSEN

Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance by H. A. Drake

(Johns Hopkins University Press, 609 pp., $68)

MORE CHRISTIANS WERE persecuted by the Roman Empire after Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 312 than before. Within a century of that momentous event, bishops had become the impresarios of urban violence, directing the Christian mob's destruction of synagogues and great pagan temples from Minorca to the edges of Persia, while the imperial government shut down traditional public cults in North Africa and in Rome itself. By the reign of the emperor Justinian, from 527 to 565, recalcitrant pagans risked crucifixion by the Christian state. And yet Christianity was a religion that prided itself on its passivism, and on its ethic of an expansive love extended even to enemies; a religion whose spokesmen, during the long centuries of its own persecution, had tirelessly argued that true belief cannot be coerced; a religion whose founder, Jesus of Nazareth, had himself died by Rome's hand. Why, then, did the emperor decide to throw his prestige and his patronage behind such a faith? And how did Christians come so readily to avail themselves of the powers of coercion?

Historians since Gibbon, when addressing these two questions, have linked their answers. Focusing their inquiry on the inner or spiritual quality of Constantine's conversion, they have divided between seeing him as either a sincere (if naïve) believer or a crafty opportunist exploiting the political possibilities of his new religious allegiance. Their various reconstructions depend upon their view of the evidence that Constantine continued to support and to appeal to traditional polytheist cults in the years after 312. Proponents of the insincere Constantine point precisely to his tolerance of these other religions; defenders of the sincere Constantine find various ways to excuse or to explain his tolerance. But both these interpretations rest upon the same assumption: that a true Christian is an intolerant Christian. And this assumption in turn supports the answer to the question of Christianity's resort to violence: that normative Christianity, too, is intolerant. It embraced coercion as soon as the state enabled it to. Any Christian society will inevitably, invariably, be a persecuting society.

NOT SO, RESPONDS H.A. Drake. He urges that these answers, and the questions that frame them, are essentially misconceived. "Coercion," which is a social practice of political organizations, cannot be understood by appeal to "intolerance," which is a characteristic of religious systems. Owing to their persistent use of theological concepts in the effort to understand political problems, Drake maintains, most historians have seriously misdiagnosed the causes, the origins, and the nature of Christian coercion. His proposed remedy is to study not theology, but social processes; to analyze not religion or theology as such, but politics.

By concentrating on politics, which he calls "the art of getting things done," Drake reveals how various Christians in the fourth century won agreement, mobilized support, and gained consensus both inside and outside the imperial government. In his pages, *The Power Game: How Washington Works* stands shoulder to shoulder with *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; Saul Alinsky and Richard Nixon together illumine the near-solid murk of the Christological controversies; and Athanasius of Alexandria emerges as antiquity's equivalent of a Tammany Hall boss. The result is a refreshingly original and powerfully argued re-conception of the issues and the forces at work in this period of the conversion not of Constantine, but of Christianity.

To build his case, Drake begins where the empire began—with Octavian, Julius Caesar's nephew and heir. After he emerged victorious in the civil war against Mark Antony, Octavian consolidated his position without alienating the Senate

PAULA FREDRIKSEN teaches the history of ancient Christianity at Boston University. Her new book, *Augustine and the Jews*, will be published by Doubleday next year.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as his uncle had done. About his power, there was no question: his command of the army ensured it. To rule effectively, however, he sought *auctoritas*, legitimacy, which in this post-Republican moment only the Senate could confer. Through elaborate public displays of mutual respect, both Octavian and the Senate enacted the pretense that he ruled at their request, as *primus inter pares*.

In modern political terms, Octavian and the senators were "players." They each had "constituencies." In Octavian's case, this was the army, especially the Praetorian Guard, the elite force that he retained in Italy; and the senators' constituencies were the literate, highly educated clients populating their patronage networks, upon whose talents the administration of the empire depended. Running the empire was "the Game" that they all played (wherein each player tries to get maximum value for the interests of his or her constituency while paying the minimum for those of any other player). As long as the frontiers remained quiet, the charade of civilian control could remain intact, and the government could continue to present itself as SPQR, or *senatus populusque romanus*, "the Senate and the people of Rome." In reality, however, armies made emperors. An emperor's *auctoritas* was only as secure as his *potestas*, his military power.

The empire's well-being, in the view of its ancient inhabitants, depended not only on this concert of armies, senators, and emperors. Even more important was the good will of the gods. Heaven superintended the empire and the myriad cities that made it up. Ancients solicited divine beneficence through innumerable public and communal rituals of procession, blood sacrifice, lustration, offerings, and song. These observances were embedded in the social life of the ancient city, where activities that to us might seem non-religious—the theater, rhetorical or athletic competitions, the convening of a city council or a court of law—invariably involved some sort of acknowledgment of and offering to traditional deities, as well as to the *numen* of the emperor.

Thus both the Roman state and the individual cities constituting it can most usefully be thought of as religious institutions. Octavian knew this well; and the importance of this vital dimension of ancient politics is attested by the novel title "Augustus"—a term with vaguely religious connotations—that was conferred upon him by the Senate. As Augustus, Octavian ruled by the mandate of heaven. More than just a general or a leader, he was *pontifex maximus*, the "supreme priest," the pope of the Roman state religion.

But in the third century things went drastically wrong. Every frontier of the empire, battered by foreign invasions, collapsed; and inflation raged; and domestic and military chaos ensued. During the five middle decades of the third century, the army put up twenty-four emperors. The political crisis reflected a religious one. Such cataclysmic disasters could only have come about because of a breach of the *pax deorum*, the peace of the gods. The empire suffered because the gods were angry. Why? In 250, the emperor Decius seized upon the same answer that the empire's cities, for almost two centuries, had proposed to account for disaster on a more local scale: human impiety had angered the gods. Put yet more simply, the problem was the Christians.

Christianity had begun to penetrate the cities of the Mediterranean by the middle of the first century. As long as it remained primarily a Jewish movement, it was by and large left alone. The earliest Christians were protected by the general tolerance that pagan culture had long accorded Diaspora Judaism, which was a familiar fixture of the Mediterranean religious landscape. This fact in itself may not seem so remarkable, since religious pluralism was a hallmark of majority culture in general and of the Roman Empire in particular. Ancient peoples typically worshipped their own ancestral gods, which formed aggregates of larger pantheons as politics required. Thus Rome's principled ecumenism was culturally congenial and politically pragmatic: as long as taxes were paid, tribute collected, and domestic tranquillity assured, its subject peoples were free to worship as they would, while the divinities of Rome and its emperors took their place in the congested liturgical calendars of the empire's wide-flung municipalities.

Diaspora Judaism did and did not fit into this general picture. Like their pagan neighbors, Jews welcomed the interest of outsiders in their communities, permitting and even encouraging sympathetic Gentiles to participate in Jewish religious celebration, and to contribute to community charities, and to sponsor the construction of synagogue buildings. What set Judaism apart was its exclusiveness: alone of all of antiquity's cults, Judaism required exclusive devotion to its deity on the part of Jews themselves.

Although Jews made room for foreigners to worship Israel's god in Jerusalem's great temple until its destruction in 70, and in innumerable synagogues scattered throughout the Diaspora before and after the coming of Rome, they could not join pagan neighbors in the worship of foreign gods. This was a matter of Jewish principle. For this reason, Jews living abroad had to wrangle various concessions from civic authorities—permission not to appear in court on the Sabbath or on holy days, exemption from public rites when offering testimony—when participating in the social life of their cities of residence. And they alone were excused from active participation in the cults of the city and the empire.

Majority culture, in sum, tolerated Jewish religious difference; and this was so because of Judaism's antiquity and ethnicity. Respect for ancestral tradition ran so deep, and was so fundamental to the religious, political, and legal culture of the ancient Mediterranean, that cities were prepared to grant various exemptions from pagan civic cult to their Jewish residents on this same grounds: Jews, too, should honor their own ancestral customs, *ta patria ethē*, even if this meant not honoring the city's own gods. Thus, though some hostile pagan observers considered Jewish exclusivism rude and even seditious, the good will of the majority generally prevailed. Quite remarkably, it extended even to the point of acknowledging the special status of former pagans who, as converts to Judaism, sought the same rights and exemptions as "native" Jews.

Christianity inherited its theological exclusivism directly from Judaism. But as its ethnic base shifted and, in some communities, its distance from the synagogue grew, problems accrued. Gentiles began to join fledgling churches in significant numbers, and they ceased to worship the gods native to their own culture. In other words, these Gentile Christians acted as if they had the religious prerogatives of Diaspora Jews, though they did not convert to Judaism. But as members of a new movement they lacked precisely what legitimated Jewish non-participation in cult: ancestral tradition. To their pagan neighbors, these Christian Gentiles were betraying their common religious patrimony, the *mos maiorum*, or "traditions of the fathers." Worse: by deserting the traditions of their own fathers, they angered the gods who were theirs by birth and blood.

Little wonder that the gods were angry; and when the gods were angry, humans paid the price. Thus "if the Tiber overflows or the Nile doesn't," as the late-second-century church father Tertullian complained; if plague struck, or famine, or earthquake, "all at once the cry goes up: 'the Christian to the lion!'" Sitting targets for local anxieties, Gentile Christians who would not sacrifice to propitiate the gods could find themselves sacrificed instead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In this first phase, anti-Christian persecution was as random, sporadic, and local as the different disasters that might spark it. But in the crisis of the third century, disaster was pandemic; and so, accordingly, were attempts to halt it. Thus in an unprecedented move, the emperor Decius in 250 mandated universal participation in public cult for all citizens of the empire. (In keeping with long-established legal tradition and social practice, Jews—and thus Jewish Christians—were exempt.) Decius did not forbid the practice of Christianity. He simply wanted to enroll all he could in a renewed effort to persuade the gods to protect Rome once again.

Christian responses varied. Many found ways to avoid, or to finesse, or to justify conforming to the emperor's edict. Others defied it, and some of these dissenters were martyred. For the next several decades, occasional imperial efforts to coerce religious conformity would set off another round of persecutions. By 284, however, when the general Diocletian seized power and imposed order on the battered empire, these cycles of internal violence seem to have subsided.

This was why, in 303, Diocletian's decision—after nearly twenty years of domestic peace—to enact a new and specifically anti-Christian policy caught everyone off guard. The staccato composition of these edicts panicked his Christian subjects, choked the prison system, and caused widespread confusion. Diocletian's pagan subjects, disgusted and alienated by the violence, themselves risked imprisonment and loss of property in order to shelter Christian fugitives. A surge in pagan sympathy for Christianity was one social result of his ill-starred policy. And there was also an important political result, argues Drake. It was Constantine's decision, in 312, to convert to the cross.

IT IS IN his discussion of Constantine—not of the emperor's psychological inner state or personal spirituality, but of the practical problems that he faced and the ways in which his allegiance to the church both solved and compounded them—that the virtue of Drake's commitment to political analysis becomes abundantly clear. Constantine was one of four contenders for sole power once Diocletian quit the scene. He faced a crowded field in which some of his rivals had already struck deals by forming coalitions with groups of Christians. By allying himself in such a novel way with the Christian God, Constantine outflanked his competition, and acquired a new constituency (this particular Christian population was a minority in the empire as a whole, but it was strongly concentrated in the cities), and initiated a new imperial effort at religious unity-within-diversity—namely, state support of a non-specific monotheism. Becoming a Christian enabled Constantine to build new and stabilizing urban coalitions across the pagan/Christian divide, thereby healing the injuries of near civil war that Diocletian's persecution inflicted. He pursued, in a novel way, a domestic policy of unity and peace.

Despite the undeniable novelty of his particular religious choice, Constantine's new policy rested upon two of the most ancient and traditional of imperial Roman religio-political concepts: the idea that heaven underwrote the well-being of the empire, and the idea that the emperor himself was representative of this relationship and responsible for its maintenance. Seen in this light, evidence that otherwise seems to point to personal hypocrisy or compromise—coins (antiquity's "sound bites," Drake nicely calls them) representing the emperor in profile with the Sun God, or Constantine and his sons' receiving victors' crowns from a non-specific hand from heaven—bespeaks instead a deliberate effort to craft a stable political coalition of pagan and Christian (and, though Drake fails to factor them in, Jewish) monotheists committed to Constantine, his dynasty, and his peace.

This perspective makes sense also of Constantine's bark-but-virtually-no-bite pronouncements against traditional polytheists, Jews, and other Christian groups ("heretics") whom the bishops, the hard-right ideologues of his new constituency, condemned. A skilled politician, Constantine placated and neutralized these extremists by stealing their rhetoric. And by prohibiting public (though not private) blood sacrifices—which were a fixture of traditional polytheist worship since time immemorial and, owing to the decades of anti-Christian persecutions from Decius to Diocletian, its particular symbol—Constantine created for government and society a religiously neutral public space.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH had been a political actor well before the conversion of Constantine, as the shift in public sentiment caused by Diocletian's policy of persecution revealed. What changed after 312 was the emergence of the bishops as power players. The bishops were distributed throughout the cities of the empire, and linked across vast spaces by their commitment to "party unity." They were in constant contact with their own urban power base (the laity), and long experienced in organizing opinion and administering resources. Thus they represented a new and enormous pool of administrative talent.

Constantine, disgusted and frustrated by the clogged and corrupt mechanisms of imperial governance, turned gladly to this new cadre of talented men. The enormous resources of goods and power that he made available to the episcopacy, as Drake reveals, was not an ill-conceived lurching on the part of a theology-besotted monarch, but a deliberate and bold effort to create in the bishops an alternative judiciary free of the material biases that plagued and paralyzed "the system." And by using the bishops to distribute newly available imperial largesse, Constantine gained a huge and relatively efficient welfare system.

So what went wrong? As Drake presents it, Constantine, by ceding so much to the bishops, lost control of the agenda. Owing to their situation at the nodes of urban power independent of the emperor and not accountable to him, and owing to the longevity of their tenure (government agents, by contrast, regularly and frequently rotated in and out of office) and to their intimate contact with their flocks (or, less piously, their urban power base), the bishops were too powerful to be mere pawns in an imperial game. They had a program of their own. Constantine's initiatives served only to enhance their power.

Committed to ideological purity—or, as they saw it, theological truth—of a very narrow sort, these men had their own ideas about the pursuit of unity. Constantine wanted to use the bishops as one foundation of his empire-wide coalition of monotheists, but the bishops wanted to use him. They wanted him, first of all, to settle issues of internal cohesion. That is, they wanted the emperor to enforce party discipline. And to gain their cooperation, Constantine had to oblige. Thus the very first victims of the new Christian government were other Christians—in the view of the bishops, "false" Christians, or heretics.

IN 361, ALMOST twenty-five years after Constantine had gone to his reward, his nephew Julian subjected this whole improvised imperial-ecclesiastical "system" to an intolerable degree of torque. Renouncing the orthodox Christianity in which he had been raised, Julian publicly and energetically embraced traditional polytheism. He revoked many of the perquisites so freely given to the church by Constantine and his sons. This was bad enough; but worst of all in the eyes of the bishops, he issued a proclamation of universal religious tolerance. Back from exile came all the heretical bishops; out popped their previously suppressed supporters. Deprived of imperial muscle, orthodox bishops could not enforce their views. Chaos reigned. By this one simple

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

act, Julian proved what the orthodox themselves had always maintained: that tolerance and Christianity—"true," orthodox Christianity—were incompatible.

Julian died on a campaign in 363. His successor, a Christian scrambling to consolidate his own position, promptly set about trying to put things right. The orthodox bishops roared back with a vengeance. Unconflictedly re-embracing power, they likewise embraced coercion: tolerance, as they saw it, was a creed for losers. By century's end, equipped with paramilitary bands of roving monks and urban "hospital workers," the bishops enforced their own views on religious unity, while the enormous spiritual prestige of the monks legitimated their resort to violence. As the power brokers of the new Roman state religion, they conferred legitimacy (as once the now-impotent Senate had) on the emperor who met with their approval. State and church were now on the same page. They embarked on a new period of cooperation and religious commitment. And the rest, as they say, is history.

WITH LASER-KEEN insight, bold thinking, and also a large measure of wry humor, Drake has presented a plausible and powerful interpretation of this formative moment in Western history. His notion that social processes should be analyzed not theologically but politically serves to make sense of much of the bewildering mass of evidence from this period. And it is delightful to see how wildly anachronistic television-pundit terms ("game," "power players," "hard-right," and so on) provide, when they are shrewdly applied, valuable explanatory purchase on some of the steepest slopes of the past.

Most of Drake's big book keeps resolutely focused on the seesaw of pagan-Christian relations in the fourth century. What he gains in argumentative clarity, however, he loses somewhat in the historical fidelity of some of his characterizations. The shortfall affects his portrait of all three groups of ancient actors: pagans, Jews, and Christians.

To the pagans first. Drake interrupts his discussion of groups and politics to pitch a surprisingly unpersuasive description of the nature of religious change. The terms turn suddenly psychological as he presents religion as a response to "needs," and religious change as the index of new "needs." And what are those needs? "A growing interest in personal salvation," a desire for more immediate and less impersonal deities. Already in the second century, he writes, individuals "were restlessly seeking answers that civic religion could not provide." "A sentiment of personal religion, a search for the afterlife" was on the rise. And so on.

Drake carefully asserts that Christianity was a beneficiary, not a cause, of this new sentiment. Still, the whole digression unhappily recalls the pious explanations of yesteryear, according to which paganism, which was ritual, public, and exterior, ceded to Christianity, which was personal, warmly communal, and interior. More simply, Christianity "won" because it was a better religion. Paganism simply ran out of gas.

As explanations go, this one does not go very far. For a start, it misdescribes paganism, which was never a single phenomenon but a thick farrago of practices and beliefs. The civic cult's stately ceremonies, and the political liturgies of emperor worship, were never designed for close, personal connection with a deity. For such spiritual satisfactions, one went elsewhere: to Penates (family deities) and revered ancestors; to the nearly infinite variety of sublunar demons and spirits; to gods of individual locales—a brook, a tree, a glade; to personal manifestations of the holy in dreams. Domestic divinities crowded the pagan household. (Christian preachers made easy fun of such homely beliefs, lampooning newlyweds' frantic search for some nuptial privacy amid groups of schmoozing gods gathered to bless the new conjugal union.) If and when pagans wanted a more personal sort of religious experience than state or city could offer, they had plenty of options to hand. Moreover, paganism did not go quietly into the good night of imperially enforced Christianity. Barraged by legislation enjoining seizure of property, physical intimidation, and exile, pagans went underground, leaving a trail of martyrs of their own.

THE JEWS ARE largely absent from Drake's picture, and this is too bad, because they afford a useful comparison with their Christian contemporaries. Drake briefly mentions both communities together when he considers how both were "exclusive" in their religious demands for insiders, and thus "intolerant" of outsiders; and he goes on to note how such postures can foster social actions such as persecution (the attempt to prevent the variant belief from existing) and coercion (the attempt to compel conformity). But Jews outside of their own land had long since made their peace, religiously and socially, with their non-Jewish neighbors, who were, after all, the vast majority of humankind. Intolerant of variety within the fold—battling with each other over the correct way to be Jewish is a timeless Jewish activity—Jews were in fact extremely tolerant of those outside the fold. The Jewish habit of receiving non-committed Gentiles into synagogue life drove later Christian spokesmen to distraction, especially if some of the Gentiles strolling in were no longer pagan, but Christian. Commodian chided Jews for allowing pagans to co-celebrate ("they ought to tell you whether it is right to worship the gods"). John Chrysostom, dreading the onslaught of the High Holidays in 387, browbeat his congregation to let go of Rosh Hashanah and the fast of Yom Kippur: "Don't you see if their [the Jews'] way of life is true, then ours must be false?"

THIS BRINGS US, finally, to the Christians. If Christians had been more like Jews, they would have better tolerated pagans; but they did not tolerate pagans. And if Christians had been less like Jews, they would have better tolerated other Christians; but they did not tolerate other Christians. Nowhere does Christianity more clearly reveal its Jewishness than in its intolerant response to its own diversity. This was true from the very beginning, clearly present in the earliest strata of evidence available in the New Testament.

In his letters, from the middle of the first century, Paul fulminates against "so-called apostles," "super-apostles," and "deceitful workers," by whom he means other Jews like himself who were also apostles to Gentiles preaching salvation in Christ. The problem, in Paul's view, was that the Gospel that they preached was different from his own, which was enough to make it false. Similarly, in the Gospel of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, the showcase of the much-praised injunctions to love one's enemies and to turn the other cheek, Jesus levels a withering blast at false insiders—that is, at other Christians:

> Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. On that day [the final Day of the Lord] many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evil-doers."

The Johannine epistles make the same case with more economy: Christians who share the views of the writer are "of God," and those who do not are "not of God": "Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist."

Different interpretations of the Christian message only increased with time. By the middle of the second century, titanic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

battles raged between various groups over such fundamental questions as the status of Jewish scriptures, the relationship between Christ and the High God, his father, to material creation, and the nature of Christ's earthly body. The scope for argument was seemingly limitless, and feeling ran high. As the late-second-century pagan Celsus observed, Christians "slander one another with dreadful and unspeakable abuse. And they make not even the least concession to reach agreement; for they utterly detest each other." Even in the heat of the Decian persecutions, orthodox teachers warned their flocks not to consort with other prisoners if those others were only "so-called" Christians, or members of a different Christian sect. Neither death, nor the moral fortitude required to refuse to worship the emperor, nor common suffering in witness to Christ could close the ideological gap. The heretic remained the child of Satan.

HOW SHOCKING IS it, then, that the Church persecuted other Christians as soon as it could? The language of hate, the ethic of exclusion and excision, had co-existed from the beginning with the language of forbearance and the ethic of love: their relation was simultaneous, not sequential. But lacking the ethnic glue that kept the quarreling Jews together, Christians of various persuasions vilified each other with abandon. And once the commonwealth was Christian, the newly empowered bishops availed themselves of a much more ancient—and scripturally warranted—Jewish paradigm for handling pagan non-believers: the prophets' destruction of "dumb images" and their worshippers when purging the land of false gods. When imperial troops closed down pagan temples in North Africa in 399, no one could doubt, said Augustine, that this was done *secundum veritatem propheticam*, "according to prophetic truth."

Ironically, the one island of relative safety for religious outsiders remained the synagogue. Jews, like everyone else, could be the occasional targets of mob violence; but Roman law generally obtained, and Judaism—unlike paganism or heresy—was never outlawed. Augustine even argued (probably in the same year that saw the destruction of the pagan temples) that any Christian monarch attempting to force the Jews to give up their Law would fall under the sevenfold curse by which God long ago had protected Cain. He extended no such theological protection to others.

The gospels of the Church Triumphant themselves depicted a Jesus who wore ritual fringes (the *tzitziot* commanded in Numbers), worshipped in the synagogue on the Sabbath and in Jerusalem on the great pilgrimage holidays, and advised his followers on the correct size of their phylacteries (*tefillin*). More: the Jewish scriptures enjoining and praising fidelity to Jewish law were, as the Old Testament, a part of this church's own canon. Perhaps these facts, too, were sufficient to make most Christians most of the time feel squeamish about persecuting Jews. In any case, for this period and for a long time after, it was safer to be a Jew than a heretic or a pagan.

Drake concludes his study by noting that "this has not been a cheerful story, and it does not have a happy ending." He is right. But it is a riveting story, and masterfully told. Anyone who rejoices in our Founding Fathers' constitutional conviction that church must be kept separate from state will read *Constantine and the Bishops* with deepest appreciation; and perhaps those who long for the opposite should read it, too. The lessons of late antiquity remain pertinent, alas, to the politics of religion in our own day. ■

Take What You Need

By RONALD RADOSH

Positively 4th Street: The Life and Times of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Mimi Baez Fariña, and Richard Fariña by David Hajdu

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 310 pp., $25)

Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan by Howard Sounes

(Grove Press, 502 pp., $27.50)

NO MODERN SINGER has been more of an enigma than Bob Dylan. As he travels across the world on what has come to be called the Never-Ending Tour, his fans, and historians of modern American culture, have come to realize that despite his staggering number of public appearances, we know very little about him. He defies the celebrity culture of our times: he does not appear on television talk shows, he rarely talks to the press, and in his infrequent interviews he seems more intent on sowing confusion than on casting light. For a biographer, certainly, Dylan presents a challenge.

But there are ways around the man's opacity. David Hajdu has chosen to concentrate on a specific time and place, the heyday of the 1960s, when Dylan and his singing partner (and erstwhile lover) Joan Baez became the king and queen of the Great Folk Revival. Along with Joan's sister Mimi and her future husband Richard Fariña, the four found their paths tumultuously crossing; and together they came to represent what so many (including themselves) regarded as the spirit of a new generation. Howard Sounes, by contrast, has chosen to write a conventional biography: a daunting task not least because four lives of Dylan have already been written. (But then Dylan's central conceit is that he has many lives.) Robert Shelton's and Anthony Scaduto's biographies appeared early in Dylan's career, and are limited and outdated, while the most recent biography, by Bob Spitz and numerous versions by Clinton Heylin, are historically insufficient or simply hagiographies written for the Dylan cult. Still, both Hajdu and Sounes have produced fascinating and finely written accounts of Dylan's life and times, while managing at the same time to provide interesting evaluations of his music and his cultural contribution.

In the era of hip-hop, it is hard to remember that only a few short decades ago American culture was electrified by

RONALD RADOSH's memoir, *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left and the Leftover Left*, has just been published by Encounter Books.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the discovery of a pop version of traditional folk music. (Perhaps "electrified" is the wrong word, as Dylan discovered at Newport in 1965.) In the late 1950s the big groups—all carrying on the tradition of the Weavers, a commercial folk group of the 1940s—were The Kingston Trio and their many imitators, including The Brothers Four, The Chad Mitchell Trio, The Tarriers, The Easy Riders, The Rooftop Singers and—the revival's climax—Peter, Paul and Mary. Hajdu reports that in 1963 alone two hundred different folk music albums were released, and ABC-TV's weekly musical revue *Hootenanny* had eleven million viewers, and two dozen different folk music magazines were published, and one major market radio station went exclusively "folk," and a candy manufacturer even produced a Hootenanny candy bar.

But Dylan did not begin his musical life as a folkie. Born in Duluth, Minnesota in 1941 but moving with his family at an early age to the small iron range town of Hibbing, Dylan received his musical education from the radio, where he heard the now-forgotten Johnnie Ray, and the country legend Hank Williams (whose songwriting and singing style would stay with him), and late-night blues shows broadcast from faraway Arkansas, Louisiana, and Chicago, which introduced him to Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, and Howlin' Wolf. Before the emergence of rock and roll, Sounes writes, "Bob had stumbled upon the basic forms of American popular music . . . before Chuck Berry, Little Richard, or Elvis Presley."

Sounes provides the most complete picture to date of Dylan's adolescence in Hibbing (he interviewed virtually all of Dylan's childhood friends), and we gain a vivid picture of the impact upon him of the discovery of what we now call American roots music. But for Dylan, too, the sound of Elvis Presley was a transforming experience. In an interview many years ago, he remarked that "when I first heard Elvis's voice I just knew that I wasn't going to work for anybody and nobody was gonna be my boss. Hearing him for the first time was like busting out of jail."

It was rock and roll to which the young Bob Zimmerman kindled most. Much has been written about the shocking effect of the day when Dylan—who had made his reputation as the best up-and-coming folk singer and protest singer, in the style made famous by Woody Guthrie—"went electric" at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. Yet Sounes points out that his high school years were taken up by a series of rock bands in which he played. With two friends, Dylan cut a 78 rpm record in 1956, on which he sang "Be-Bob-a-Lula" and "Earth Angel" and played the piano. His chosen style for his bands was that of Little Richard and Gene Vincent, and his first guitar was a cheapie from the Sears-Roebuck catalogue, a solid-body Supro electric. Dylan gave his first groups names such as "The Golden Chords" and "Elston Gunn and his Rock Boppers."

His ambition in life, it said in his high school yearbook, was "to join Little Richard." After graduation, Dylan took a bus to Fargo, North Dakota, where under the name Elston Gunn he got a job waiting tables. Within a short time, he auditioned for Bobby Vee, a local rock and roller who was beginning to make a name. Vee took him on as a piano player for local gigs. Already at that early age he was a creature of fierce ambition: he told his friend John Bucklen that he was destined to become a "music star." In 1960, sitting on the lawn in front of the student union at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, he told me the same thing: "I'm going to be as big a star as Elvis Presley. . . . I'll play the same and even bigger arenas. I know it." (I don't remember if I believed him.)

But his parents had, well, parents' plans for their son. At the end of the summer of 1959, at their urging, he enrolled at the University of Minnesota. As most everyone now knows, the young student spent most of his time in the bohemian quarter known as Dinkytown, where he found a radical bookstore and a coffeeshop called the Ten O'Clock Scholar. Here Dylan learned that the most "advanced" music of the day, for young and avant-garde circles, was not Top Ten rock and roll but traditional American folk music. And here he came across a local hipster poet, as well as two white blues singers, "Spider" John Koerner and Dave "Snaker" Ray, who along with Tony Glover would gain a nationwide reputation in folk circles as the white singers who mastered an authentic Southern rural and black sound.

In Dinkytown, the heroes were Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, and Pete Seeger. At one of the local events, Dylan heard a record cut by a classically trained African American woman named Odetta Felious, and she (Dylan later recalled) "turned me on to folk singing." Dylan took his electric guitar and amp to a music store and traded them in for a folksinger's acoustic guitar. Dylan, you might say, went acoustic; and at Newport a few years later, when he rattled his folk fans with his electric set, he was in fact returning to his own roots.

Contrary to what many people believe, Dylan was never genuinely political. His left-wing friends in the Minnesota folk crowd tried to interest him in the events of the day. They told him about the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and the movement to abolish HUAC. Dave Whitaker, Herschel Kaminsky (whom Sounes does not mention), and others did their progressive best, as Dylan was always in Whitaker's living room when he held meetings of the Socialist Fund, a Trotskyist group. They took Dylan to a screening of the anti-HUAC film *Operation Abolition*. But still Dylan, as Sounes writes, "remained steadfastly, frustratingly apolitical." He refused to write pro-Castro songs—in contrast to, say, Phil Ochs.

In the hip subculture of Dinkytown, Dylan hung out with the politicals, but he stayed aloof. Indeed, as Sounes points out, when Dylan wrote what many called "protest songs," those songs were devoid of particular political content; they were taken up instead with universal themes, to which they owe their staying power. The few songs that were concretely political, such as the trite "George Jackson," and the biting ballad "Hurricane," about Rubin "Hurricane" Carter (whose cause Dylan later abandoned), and "Julius and Ethel," the unreleased ode to the Rosenbergs, are so artistically poor that they deserve to be forgotten. When many lent their names and their talents to anti-Vietnam advertisements and rallies, Dylan was not among them. In his interview with Happy Traum and John Cohen in *Sing Out!* in 1968, Traum tried to get Dylan to comment on the meaning of the war in Vietnam and Dylan refused, remarking only that he knew a good painter who never saw the need to say anything about Vietnam.

It was in Dinkytown that Dylan heard and was mesmerized by Harry Smith's Folkways Records *Anthology of American Folk Music* (which was recently reissued on CD by Smithsonian Folkways). In these records Dylan detected the true grain of rural American folk music, what Greil Marcus later called the "strange, weird" America that Dylan captured years later in the "basement tapes" in Saugerties, New York. "It's all poetry," Dylan said of the Smith anthology, "every single one of those songs." And it was around this time that Dave Morton, a student and a friend, presented Dylan with a copy of Woody Guthrie's *Bound for Glory*, a book whose tall tales and contrived Okie idiom the aspiring young star would quickly adopt as his own. Within a day or so of reading the book, Dylan had memorized and sung Guthrie's "Tom Joad," which told the story of the main character in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

In Woody Guthrie, as Hajdu observes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You deserve a factual look at...

"Peace in the Middle East (I)"

Can it be achieved under the present circumstances?

After over fifty years of the bizarre notion of not recognizing the "existence" of the State of Israel, after eight years of the Oslo "peace process", and after being offered unbelievably generous conditions to bring an end to the long and bloody conflict, the Palestinians have rejected those terms and have instead chosen to continue on their path of violence. They have erupted in the bloody Al-Aksa Intifada, which so far has caused hundreds of dead and thousands of injured. The question can be raised whether peace with the Palestinians is possible at all.

What are the facts?

The Root of the Middle East Conflict. Many observers of the Middle East believe that the root of the area's conflict lies in the dispute between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews -- that peace could come to the area if that conflict could be resolved. And the way it should be resolved, these observers believe, is by Israel's yielding its heartland, Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), and the Gaza Strip for the creation of a Palestinian state and by returning the Golan Heights to Syria. But after the late Hafez Assad's brusque refusal to accept the return of the Golan (because it would not include the shores of the Sea of Galilee), and after Arafat's contemptuous refusal of Barak's generous offer, it is clear that the Arabs do not want peace -- they want confrontation and the destruction of Israel.

People also overlook that the conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Jews long predates Israel's control over the administered territories, that Arab-Arab wars are endemic in the area, and that Israel would be defenseless and at the mercy of its implacable enemies if it were to yield control of these strategic territories without a full peace -- not just with the Palestinians, but with *all* the Arabs.

The Menace of Islamic Fundamentalism. The clamor for yielding strategic territories to the Arabs is the first step in the immutable Arab attempt to liquidate Israel altogether. Because, certainly, Israel, with its fewer than 6 million inhabitants, compared to almost 300 million Arabs, and with its less than 10,000 square miles, compared to almost 5 million square miles of the Arab countries, cannot possibly be a threat to peace or a menace to the Arabs. And reducing the territory of Israel from 10,000 square miles to 7,000 square miles would not seem likely to bring peace one step closer. The main reason that real peace is so difficult to attain is the political and cultural context of the Middle East, which is dominated by the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. By the tenets of this fundamentalism, Israel's size is not of importance; it is the very existence of Israel that, to fundamentalist believers, is an intolerable offense, an unacceptable insult to Islam. The fundamentalist Moslems -- Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and all the others -- do not aim at peace with Israel or the recovery of some territory. Their publicly declared aim is the destruction of the Jewish State. On more than one occasion, the Islamic Jihad has stated: "[This is] definite and irrevocable . . . We will be satisfied with nothing but the destruction of Israel."

Real Peace Must Be Global. The current upheavals in Israel, in its administered territories, and in the areas that Israel has transferred to the Palestinian Authority, may give the impression that peace would come to the region if Israel would come to terms with the aspirations of the Palestinians. But that is impossible, because the destruction of Israel is the stated purpose of the Palestinians, as embedded in their never-revoked Covenant. But even if it were achievable, peace would not come about, because such a peace would be a non-global one. The most fervent enemies of Israel -- Iran, Iraq, and including even Egypt (with which Israel is technically at peace) -- have as their principal foreign policy goal the destruction of Israel, a goal that would not be altered even if Israel acceded to every wish of the Palestinians. Those Arab statesmen who have tried to come to terms with the Jewish State have invariably found a terrible end. King Abdullah of Transjordan was assassinated by the rejectionists, so was President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and so was President Bashir Gemayel of Lebanon, all of whom envisioned peaceful cooperation and co-existence with Israel. Every Arab leader knows that any overt declaration of wishing to make real peace and to co-exist and to cooperate with Israel is a suicidal death sentence.

"Real peace . . . can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies, and historical ambitions in the Arab-Iranian block."

We all want peace, of course, especially the Israelis, who have been almost constantly embattled since the foundation of their state. But because of Arab-Islamic fundamentalism that cannot tolerate a Jewish presence on any part of "Arab territory", and because any peace arrived at would be non-global, such real peace would seem difficult to attain at this time. One hopes that real peace -- the Arabs' acceptance of a Jewish State and peaceful co-existence and cooperation with it -- will come eventually. But it can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies, and historical ambitions in the Arab-Iranian block, abandonment of fanatic fundamentalism, and change to genuine democracy. And that may well take a very long time. In the meantime, Israel must keep up its guard and cannot afford to yield strategic territory, without which it would be vulnerable.

This ad has been published and paid for by

FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco,CA 94159
Gerardo Joffe, President

FLAME is a tax-exempt, non-profit educational 501(c)(3) organization. Its purpose is the research and publication of the facts regarding developments in the Middle East and exposing false propaganda that might harm the interests of the United States and its allies in that area of the world.Your tax-deductible contributions are welcome. They enable us to pursue these goals and to publish these messages in national newspapers and magazines. We have virtually no overhead. Almost all of our revenue pays for our educational work, for these clarifying messages, and for related direct mail.

Visit our website: www.factsandlogic.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dylan found a man who was Hank Williams, James Dean, and Buddy Holly rolled into one: "a literate folksinger with a rock and roll attitude." Determined to meet Guthrie, Dylan set out for New York. His journey took him first to Madison, Wisconsin, where there was a thriving folk scene as well as a heavy left-wing presence. Unfortunately, Sounes only interviewed one Madison source, my college roommate Marshall Brickman, who freely admits that his recollection of Dylan is skimpy. Sounes has Dylan playing piano in our apartment in Clymer Place, which could not be true, because we did not have a piano.

COURTESY FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

Ethan Singer, an unidentified musician, Richard Fariña, Bob Dylan, and Eric von Schmidt performing at the Troubadour, London, 1963

He also has Dylan attending a Pete Seeger concert in Madison, adding that "Bob was the most significant young artist Seeger reached." For this story, Sounes relies on the memory of Seeger, who is now well into his eighties. Seeger told Sounes that "it was at one of these concerts around '58 that Joan Baez heard me [in California] and I think I was singing in the University of Wisconsin and Bob was there. I think there was a picket line outside from the American Legion calling me a dangerous Communist. [Bob] once told me he was at that concert."

Seeger is wrong. As it happens, I was an officer of the Labor Youth League, the Communist student group at the university, as well as a founder and president of the Folklore Society. Seeger's very first concert was sponsored by the LYL, and received much publicity as well as a small picket line and protest from the veterans' organization and conservative student groups. And the concert took place in 1957, when Dylan was still a high school student in Hibbing, and definitely not in Madison. Sounes should not have relied upon Seeger. Dylan was in Madison in January 1961, and from there he went on to New York, driving with Fred Underhill, then one of our crowd. After a few months in New York, he returned west for a while—to Minnesota, says Sounes, but in fact to Madison, where he stayed again for a few weeks at the apartment of Danny Kalb and Paul Breines.

It was in New York that Dylan met Woody Guthrie, and also John Lee Hooker, and Guthrie's young sidekick Ramblin' Jack Elliot, and Liam Clancy, the ballad singer and lead voice for the Irish folk group The Clancy Brothers. Both Sounes and Hajdu make a point of how, even at the start, Dylan invented a new identity for himself, depicting himself as an orphan whose origins were ambiguous and who (like his hero Guthrie) was a drifter and an itinerant singer. He would "tell ridiculously improbable stories about his past life," Sounes writes. He said that he looked Semitic because of the Sioux blood in his family.

Hajdu confirms that Dylan would tell his friends that he used to be a coal miner and the like. Even in his personal interactions, he was a teller of the tallest tales. As Hajdu writes, "transformation has always been part of the American idea; in the New World, anyone can become a new person." The irony of Bobby Zimmerman's "metamorphosis into Bob Dylan lies in the application of so much illusion and artifice in the name of truth and authenticity." Indeed, Dylan learned more than mannerisms and styles of speech from Guthrie; he learned also how to re-create himself. For the Dust Bowl balladeer, after all, was not a poor Okie in childhood; he came from a fairly middle-class family, and much of his own self-portrait was equally fictional. And Ramblin' Jack Elliot was a Jewish boy from Brooklyn, born Elliot Charles Adnopoz, who mimicked Guthrie's style and performed his songs, and who changed his name to disguise his Jewishness, later sarcastically calling himself "the last of the Brooklyn cowboys."

IN GREENWICH VILLAGE Dylan found his element, and Joan Baez. Unlike Dylan, Baez never disguised her origins or her family ties. She had begun to thrive in the bohemia of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the coffeehouses near Harvard University, such as the soon-to-be-famous Club 47. (Dylan also visited the scene.) For super-serious young people in those days, jazz was perceived to be excessively intellectual and insufficiently rebellious; but folk music offered a link to real people and an anti-intellectual stance. Hadn't Seeger himself dropped out of Harvard in the 1930s to search for the real America?

Hajdu marvelously tells the tale of the mid-1960s. Rather than approach his subject in a purely biographical fashion, he narrates the story of a group of people who, in the course of fashioning their own individualities, transformed American music by creating a new genre called "folk-rock." The music of Baez and Dylan, and of Richard and Mimi Fariña, provided the anthems of the baby-boomers. (Adulation of their work united Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton, who have both heaped praise on Dylan.) When Dylan was just emerging as a significant figure in the Village folk scene, Baez had already been discovered, and with her majestic soprano and her earthy style of standing shoeless, long hair flowing, as she sang old English ballads and Appalachian folk songs, she was perhaps the best-known folksinger in America. Richard Fariña was a talented writer, raconteur, and rambler who is remembered today largely for his death in a motorcycle accident on the very day of his greatest success, at the publication party for his novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me*, which came complete with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a blurb from his college friend Thomas Pynchon.

Hajdu makes a convincing claim that it was Fariña who can be rightfully called the creator of folk-rock. While Dylan was still singing straight acoustic folk-style songs, Fariña felt the growing sterility of the music and sought to blend its best parts with American rock and roll. By 1961, Hajdu writes, Fariña told folkies gathered at the famed Gaslight in Greenwich Village that "the problem with folk ... was that it needed a beat." Traditional American music, he argued, sounded like nursery rhymes. Grabbing a stack of plates from a waitress, he flipped them upside down. "American folk music is square on the beat," he proclaimed, and he began to pat out a four-quarter time pattern with his left hand and a three-quarter pattern with his right. Fred Neil, who wrote some very beautiful folk songs and later the standard "Everybody's Talkin'," noted that none of the folkies could keep up with Fariña: "he delivered the goods and knocked everybody out." Neil was right. Listen to Fariña's "Hard-Loving Loser," recorded with his second wife, Mimi, who is Joan Baez's sister, and you will recognize in the lyrics and in the music the style that Dylan soon adopted and that The Byrds perfected.

THE STRENGTH OF both these books is to penetrate behind the music so as to provide a sense of the artists' lives. And the story is not a pretty one. Dylan was ready and willing to ride over everyone on his way to stardom. Indeed, Hajdu suggests that his personal relationship with Baez was undertaken solely to advance his career. Baez had been impressed with Dylan's songwriting, and was one of the first to see something special in him. Dylan was indifferent to her music; he found her voice too pretty, and without roots in blues, gospel, or jazz. What interested him was how she got so famous. The first time he met her, he played her the first song he ever wrote, "Song to Woody," although he told everyone that he did not want her to record it. Fred Neil told him: "Man, what you need to do, man, is hook up with Joan Baez. She is so square.... She's your ticket, man. All you need to do, man, is start screwing Joan Baez." And Dylan responded: "That's a good idea. I think I'll do that. But I don't want her singing none of my songs."

Having been introduced to the world by Baez at her concerts in 1963, Dylan brought her with him to London for his British tour a few years later, only to refuse to let her appear on stage with him, and generally treat her viciously and hurtfully. By then Dylan was seeing Sara Lownds, whom he later married; Baez discovered the truth when Dylan took sick and she found Sara by his bedside at the hospital. And yet, by Baez's own word, she had used others on her own way to stardom. She had engaged in a bitter sibling rivalry with her very gifted and ambitious sister Mimi, whom she constantly discouraged. And by introducing Dylan and tying his rising star to herself, Baez had guaranteed a place for herself in American musical history. (Hajdu had the benefit of Baez's cooperation, which included copies of family letters in which her relationship with Dylan is discussed.)

Reading Hajdu's fascinating account of the personal lives of these extraordinary folkies, one is constantly reminded of how much they functioned in an alternative version of the show-biz world. Fariña married one of the folk revival's first stars, the beautiful Texas singer Carolyn Hester, whose mentor was Buddy Holly. It was through Hester that Fariña gained his own entry into the world of folk music. Later, with their marriage on the wane, Fariña made a move on Joan Baez's teenaged sister, courting Mimi when she lived with her parents near Paris, writing to her after he left, and eventually convincing the sixteen-year-old girl to marry a man who was twenty-five years old.

Hajdu traces Dylan's early protest songs to the influence of Suze Rotolo, the woman whom he was seeing when he met Baez. (She is the dreamy girl on the cover of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.) She urged him to write songs such as "The Death of Emmet Till" and to concentrate on social commentary and political dissent. "Was he honoring his muse by carrying on Suze's kind of work?" Hajdu asks, "Or much as he had changed instruments, jackets and names before, was he adopting something new for the potential glory in it?" It is a fine question. One answer comes from Dylan's Minnesota folk friend Tony Glover. Upon hearing Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'," Glover asked Dylan why he was writing such tripe, which did not have the power and the soul of the black-based blues to which they thrilled in Dinkytown, and sounded more like an inauthentic Seeger-style call to action. Dylan told him: "It seems to be what people like to hear."

BY 1962, HOWEVER, Dylan was moving away from (in Hajdu's words) "tuneful intimations of Seeger and Guthrie toward a bolder style with the bite of rock and roll." Indeed, Dylan himself saw "Blowin' in the Wind" as a "lucky classic song ... one-dimensional," and despite its amazing popularity, he seemed not particularly proud of it. He may have written "The Ballad of Hollis Brown" about a North Dakota farmer driven to violence, but it is told "in blues-style AAB refrains." And while "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," still viewed by Seeger as Dylan's most lasting song, seems to be about the danger of nuclear fallout, it transcends and dilutes its political content with words that, as Hajdu observes, "provoke feeling and thought as well as action." Dylan, in a single ballad, could combine Seeger's protest, Blake's poetry, Child's ballads, and American folk music to produce something new and different. For this reason, his songs endure long after the immediate issues of their time have been forgotten.

The story of the Newport Folk Festival of 1965 has been told and retold, always in the same mythic manner; but Hajdu is the first to look carefully behind the myth and to reconstruct what really happened. The event also featured Richard and Mimi Fariña, who planned to be accompanied on electric guitar by Al Kooper, heading a full band that featured hard-rocking songs. They did perform,

CONSIDER THIS:

- 84% of TNR readers plan to travel in the next 12 months
- 91% of TNR readers dine out
- 92% of TNR readers purchased books in the past year
- 85% of TNR readers contribute to worthy causes

(Source: MRI 1999 Custom Subscriber Study)

GOT YOUR ATTENTION?

ADVERTISE WITH

THE NEW REPUBLIC

SMALL SPACE PROGRAM.

Contact Ann Rossaki
(202) 331-7494
for reservations and information.

Put Your Message in Front of 100,000 Consumers!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but in the pouring rain, without electric amplification. When it was Dylan's turn, he appeared with members of Paul Butterfield's electric blues bland, including Kooper on keyboards and Mike Bloomfield on electric guitar. Dylan himself came dressed not in his folkie work clothes, but in a black leather blazer and motorcycle boots, holding a Fender Stratocaster, the Buddy Holly model. "Maggie's Farm," "Like a Rolling Stone," and "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," were performed with the band; but Dylan concluded with an unforgettable acoustic version of "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue," and "Mr. Tambourine Man," which the Byrds would make into a pop hit.

It became, Hajdu tells us, "one of the most enduring myths of popular culture" that Dylan was booed off the stage by folk fans, having insulted the folkies with a radical turn to rock, and that, having heard the boos, he returned to seek absolution with two acoustic songs. Backstage, it is said, Seeger tried to cut the electric cables with an axe, fuming about Dylan's betrayal of folk music. But Hajdu shows that all of this is false. By the time Dylan appeared at Newport, he had already released his electric album *Bringing It All Back Home*, as well as the single "Subterranean Homesick Blues," and "Like A Rolling Stone" was already becoming a rock anthem, and was a Top Forty hit on AM radio.

Moreover, the audience in Newport that day had already heard electric music. The Butterfield Blues Band had played their set, as had The Chambers Brothers, and they had received enthusiastic responses. What people were really booing, Hajdu reports, was the poor sound quality, since Newport was not set up properly for electric instruments. Many people heard only feedback and noise, and could not hear Dylan's singing. As Jack Elliot told Hadju: "The music was good. It sounded like horseshit." Others disagreed, noting that Dylan's band had not rehearsed together, and so the quality of the performance was what infuriated others.

Oscar Brand, a figure in the New York folk scene, told Sounes that "the electric guitar represented capitalism ... the people who were selling out." Seeger now claims that he was upset, but only because the volume of the instruments drowned out what he saw as the socialist message of "Maggie's Farm." What *was* clear was that Dylan's acoustic song "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" was a swan song to the end of the folk revival. Indeed, Irwin Silber, an executive with the left-wing organization People's Artists and the editor of *Sing Out!*, wrote an open letter to Dylan in which he condemned him for losing contact with the people, for writing introspective songs instead of political songs and filling them with maudlin and cruel sentiments. Some would say that Dylan's lyrics—"there's something happening and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?"—were his response to Silber. True or not, it was incontrovertible that Dylan was moving to a place far away from the world of the folk revival, and from artists like Seeger.

In Circe's Garden

The goats have milked themselves.
The wine mulls in its jug.
A flock of terns simmers and darts
above the surf, hunting for bugs.

Mist rise. Sundown
slitting its wrists in the warm bay.
Circe lifts the oiled hair at her nape.
Prismatic, the robe sighs

from her back. None of it's real—
her ripe lips, breasts mapped
with green veins: hocus pocus—
sawdust and wax.

Beautiful sawdust. Beautiful wax.
The men snuffle and root in their sty.
Polités glares through the window,
ears twitching, a bluefly

buzzing his snout. What can I tell him—
the world is full of impossible things?
It gets better, then it gets worse?
A short sail, dark wind—

the cold mansion, Acheron weeping
into its cave. Groaning, confused,
our fathers will dust their suits
of worms, shuffle out to embrace us...

Jon Loomis

FROM THAT POINT ON, America's enchantment with folk began to disappear. A few acts, such as Peter, Paul and Mary, would stay together, largely as nostalgia trips through the music of the generation's youth; but the future was rock and roll. By 1964, the Beatles had hit America. Richard Fariña had decided to give up music altogether and to make his mark as a writer. On the day Fariña died, April 30, 1966, which was Mimi's twenty-first birthday, Dylan was in Denmark with Levon Helm and the Hawks, who were soon to re-create themselves as The Band, on a grueling drug-soaked and liquor-soaked European tour, playing hard rock and drawing huge crowds.

When he returned to America, Dylan, too, would have his life changed on a motorcycle. On July 29, driving on a road in Woodstock, New York, Dylan had an accident. Here Sounes picks up the story, doing his own part to separate myth from reality. Stories abound about Dylan's accident. Through careful investigative reporting, Sounes establishes that a minor skid caused Dylan to lose his balance and to fall off the bike, and that—contrary to reports handed to the press—he did not break his neck, fall unconscious, and almost die. He was not even taken to a hospital; instead, his wife drove him to a doctor's home office fifty miles away, a one-hour drive over country roads, "not a journey for a man in dire need of medical help." But the result was something that Dylan desperately needed: an excuse to draw the first part of his remarkable career to a close.

The following few years turned out to be the period in which Dylan was personally most at peace, the years in which he lived something closest to what most people would consider a happy family life, visiting friends and raising his young children in Woodstock. It was, as Sounes puts it, "a relatively quiet domestic life." At noon Dylan would drive down to West Saugerties, where with members of The Band he would write and record the hauntingly beautiful songs that became *The Basement Tapes*, songs that were closer to the Harry Smith anthology than to what he had been singing on tour. *John Wesley Harding* was an even greater achievement in this vernacular musical mysticism.

IN 1970 DYLAN moved back to Greenwich Village, a particularly ill-judged choice for a famous man zealously guarding his privacy. His home on MacDougal Street was an invitation to his obsessed fans. Sounes gives us more details about the sordid A. J. Weberman, who made his reputation as a "garbologist" by rummaging through Dylan's trash to find more information about his hero. Weberman exemplified the view of those '60s radicals who felt that Dylan had sold them out, while Weberman himself was a convicted drug dealer who spread the rumor that Dylan was a heroin addict. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1974, Dylan moved from New York to Malibu, California, where he purchased twelve acres overlooking the Pacific, and spent millions of dollars trying to design a fantasy house that would include one of the first cars he ever bought, which was to be suspended from the ceiling of the living room. Its highlight was a Russian-style onion dome made of copper: Dylan thought that it would help him see it from anywhere, and thus find his way home. All this bizarrerie did not prevent him from producing one of his finest records, *Blood on the Tracks*, in 1975.

The "Rolling Thunder" tour started in the same year, but it was a bad scene. From Sounes we learn that the tour retained its own cocaine dealer. At this point Sounes's account of Dylan's life provokes a grim comparison with the decline of Elvis Presley. Surrounded by yes-men, managed by an unscrupulous producer who had little concern for his art, and becoming a parody of himself, Presley faded out amid the pharmacological perquisites of fame; and no one had the courage to tell him the truth. Certainly Dylan's life of Malibu decadence—replete with the services of the renowned palimony lawyer Marvin Mitchelson ("about $60 million later," he told Sounes, "I knew every song he ever wrote")—was not exactly what Woody Guthrie had in mind.

It was corrected for a time by what Sounes calls Dylan's "enthusiasm for Jesus Christ," which culminated in what seemed to be a genuine conversion to Christianity. But the conversion came with a price. Keith Richards mocked him as the "prophet of profit." Ronnie Hawkins, the founder of The Band, told Dylan that as soon as he found that his new albums were not selling, "you are gonna be an atheist." Sounes describes shows at which Dylan lectured angry audiences that he would not sing "filthy mouth stuff" and if they wanted rock and roll, they should see Kiss and "rock 'n' roll all the way down to the pit!" A final tour performance was cancelled owing to poor ticket sales, proving that "Satan did his work in the box office" (as Sounes mordantly remarks). And still Dylan managed to write some extraordinary songs.

By 1981, in any event, Dylan's Christian phase was over. In the years that followed, his music became more and more indifferent, and he became more and more of an official national treasure. Eventually he even received a Kennedy Center award from President Clinton, and just this spring he won an Academy Award. His acceptance speech at the Oscars was a little crushing to hear, as he recited the names of the suits behind the record and the movie. He sounded like every other Tinseltown type. He sold "The Times They Are A-Changin'" to the Bank of Montreal, and later to an accounting firm, for a commercial; and one of his old protest anthems became a jingle for life insurance. A hard rain had a-fallen.

Reading about Dylan's life, one is struck by the magnitude of his unhappiness. The failed marriages and the scores of women were signs of a complete absence of personal tranquillity. And then there is all the weirdness. Sounes reports that Dylan stays only in small motels, demanding that dogs be allowed, and windows be open so that he does not have to use the air conditioning; and after a tour appearance he rarely leaves his room and simply has his staff bring him whatever he requires. He seeks out friends when he needs them, but when they seek him out they are often ignored or rebuked. His touring manager and old friend Victor Maymudes, who was with him from the beginning, was fired when Dylan did not like the way Maymudes's daughter ran a coffee shop that he financed. Even to his children, Sounes writes, he "seemed to be a driven, introverted, and insular man consumed with a monomania for his music."

And yet he managed to wrench some fine music out of the mess of his life, songs of power and beauty, haunting reflections on aging, love, and the ironies of life. His most recent recording, *Time out of Mind*, stands with the best of his work—not least because it reaches back to his roots in the rough, compassionate, and profoundly true universe that Harry Smith captured in his anthology. For Dylan is himself one of the giants of that universe. As Sounes writes, "he was by now as much a part of the folklore of American music" as any of the people to whom he raptly listened in Minnesota when he first played the *Anthology of American Folk Music* on 33 rpm records. No other contemporary American singer even approaches his accomplishment, in his words and in his music. The man who kept inventing himself, the trickster tangled up in blue, turns out to have been a hero of authenticity. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 4

won't arrest you." Apparently the student's words were incorrectly transcribed, for almost surely he was referring to Stepin Fetchit, the first African American actor to have featured billing in American movies. Born Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry in 1902, he borrowed his screen name from a racehorse he'd successfully bet on during his pre-Hollywood days. He appeared in more than 25 movies, most of them in the 1930s, playing comic, bumbling, lazy, meek characters, which were later decried as insulting stereotypes.

LIESELOTTE HOFMANN
Santa Rosa, California

Size up

TO THE EDITORS:

Andrew Sullivan's sweeping attack on federal spending ("Downsize," May 14) was far more removed from the real world than some of the bureaucracies and agencies incurring his wrath. In castigating Medicare's expansion and "the archaic sinkhole known as Social Security," Sullivan conveniently ignores the critical role the programs have played in dramatically reducing the poverty rate among the elderly in the last 50 years. Government spending over the last several decades has also produced cleaner air and water, more access to higher education, breakthroughs in the treatment of AIDS and breast cancer, and enhanced opportunity for the disabled to participate fully in our society and economy.

This progress does not mean that the federal government always works, that existing programs and new spending initiatives shouldn't be carefully scrutinized, or that government shouldn't do more for children. But to have a balanced assessment of government spending and economic policies, we must go beyond Sullivan's simplistic depiction.

The unvarnished truth is that a nation as big, complicated, and dynamic as the United States needs strong public and private sectors. Prosperity, unfortunately, has not eliminated poverty and vast income inequality. Instances of government waste don't eliminate the need for major federal spending, a strong social safety net, and a boost up the economic ladder for disadvantaged citizens. The answer isn't to reflexively downsize but rather to carefully size up our needs.

SCOTT WOLF
Providence, Rhode Island

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be fewer than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Please do not send letters via fax.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Excess

SO YASIR ARAFAT HAS WHISpered a cease-fire. But only after what the newspapers described as a "heated meeting" in Ramallah with Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister and former PLO enthusiast, in which Arafat seems to have realized that even Europe's longtime Fatah loyalists are tiring of him. It certainly took them long enough. Until this weekend's enormity on the Tel Aviv beach, all the sober, respectable, liberal voices in Europe and elsewhere—Kofi Annan and Colin Powell primary among them—were faulting Israel for what they called its "excessive reaction" and "disproportionate" response to Palestinian terror. And what, pray tell, would the secretary-general and secretary of state have considered a non-"excessive reaction"? In any case, it wasn't the specter of a non-excessive reaction that led Arafat this week to constrain, at least verbally, the militias under his formal command. It was the specter of an "excessive reaction," which is exactly why such "excessive reactions" are sometimes necessary if there is to be any hope of peace.

BARELY ANYONE BELIEVES ARAFAT IS truly committed to a cease-fire. (In fact, the Palestinian chairman later clarified that the cease-fire applies only to Israel proper and not to the West Bank and Gaza.) But, even if he is, he is in a terrible trap of his own making. Having freed scores, perhaps hundreds, of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists from Palestinian Authority prisons since the intifada began in September (some as recently as last week), Arafat cannot easily re-incarcerate them. For one thing, their more candid brand of terror has the support of the famous Palestinian street, the mob that is nascent Palestine's crude calculus of what its public wants. So acting against these terrorists actually invites a Palestinian civil war. Already the 13 armed groups and grouplets, the bomb specialists and the mortar makers, assembled in a coalition called the National and Islamic Organizations, including Arafat's own Fatah, have repudiated his cease-fire. And, for all the Bush administration's enthusiasm about a cease-fire, the American consulate in Jerusalem this week told its employees to avoid restaurants, movie theaters, and open-air markets.

"THREE HOURS BEFORE THE TERROR attack, I was jogging there. I ran to Jaffa and from there back to the hotel," said Fischer, explaining his anger. I know the feeling. For three months last spring, my wife and I lived in old Jaffa and walked on the beach promenade past the Dolphinarium to old Tel Aviv (Jaffa is several thousand years older). The people we passed on those strolls were not settlers; few were soldiers; few were religious. They were among Israel's least ideological citizens, as far from the conflict as any Israelis have ever been. And that is exactly why they were killed—to make the point that no one in Israel is ever safe. "I love the lifestyle of Tel Aviv," said Fischer, calling it "one of the most wonderful cities I know." He is right. It is ordinarily a very happening place, rather like Barcelona. But now it is in mourning, and its orphaned parents grieve.

ARAFAT AND HIS COMRADES CLAIM they yearn above all else to create a country. But their actions belie that. After all, they could have had a country several times over, a contiguous country, and—after Ehud Barak's dissipative concessions—a country with its capital in Jerusalem. Their actions suggest that their deeper, truer motivation is to destroy a country. And this is true even for Palestinian leaders not in Arafat's employ. The late Faisal Husseini, rector of Al-Quds University and a dove, according to *The New York Times*' gulled Jerusalem correspondent Deborah Sontag, recently analyzed the current situation by reviving the hackneyed South Africa analogy. Palestine will never produce a Mandela, the argument goes, unless Israel now produces a de Klerk. But Israel has already produced a de Klerk; in fact, in Ehud Barak it produced someone more sincerely (or naively) committed to reconciliation than de Klerk ever was. But Barak does not count because Husseini's analogy is actually quite literal: An Israeli de Klerk wouldn't just help birth an independent Palestine; he would do what de Klerk did—tell his people to live as a minority in someone else's land, in greater Palestine. How else can we reconcile the South Africa analogy with Husseini's recent declaration, to a forum of lawyers in Beirut, that he envisioned Palestine stretching "from the river to the sea"? Husseini, predictably, said his words were taken out of context. Other Palestinian leaders say they will accept a two-state solution. But their insistence on "the right of return" of even third- (and soon fourth-) generation descendants of those who abandoned Palestine—willfully or under duress—a half-century ago suggests that, while they might settle for two states, they will insist that both contain a Palestinian majority.

A NEW ATROCITY MAKES THE MIND forget the last one. But I cannot put out of my mind the stoning to death on May 9 of two Israeli boys by Palestinians in a cave near the Jewish West Bank town of Tekoah, a town that even Israel's dwindling "give it all away" movement would retain. A group of Palestinians happened upon two Jewish kids, ages 13 and 14, playing hooky from school in the countryside near their homes. The men dragged them into a cave and stoned them until all life ebbed from their battered bodies. *The Washington Post* informed us that one of the victims could be identified only by his fingerprint. Writing in the wildly dovish Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, Nadav Shragai drew the necessary conclusion: "Whoever perpetrated the crime did not stop with killing; the bodies were abused in a way that is beyond the human imagination."

WHILE STONING SEEMS EXCEPTIONally brutal to Western sensibilities, in the Muslim world it survives—in different countries for different offenses. Justified through Islam, it echoes another medieval atrocity receiving increased attention: honor killings. Honor killing is the revenge wreaked on a woman for supposed sexual offenses that blacken her family name (for instance, being raped). Usually an honor killing is committed by the woman's family, preferably by her brother or her father (see "Faith of Her Fathers," by Eliza Griswold, TNR, February 26). Readers may remember the 1980 public television special "Death of a Princess," which showed the execution of a Saudi princess judged guilty of adultery. A bit embarrassed but not chastened, the Saudi government protested the telecast. A Pakistani doctor, Younus Shaikh, imprisoned and charged with blasphemy, may soon be hanged for having told his students that the prophet Mohammed was not circumcised until the age of 40 and had not shaved his pubic and underarm hair. According to the *Times*, Shaikh's students regretted not killing him on the spot. In a sense, the Middle East's defining figure remains Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, twelve years dead but with his legacy still dominating his country. And, of course, his ideological style dominates even more cruelly in the Taliban's Afghanistan. Shaikh at least offended some image of the prophet. But what was the offense of the two children from Tekoah? And what would Powell and Annan have approved as a non-"excessive" Israeli reaction to their murders?

MARTIN PERETZ

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Truth About School Vouchers - 1

Who Uses Vouchers?

Some opponents of school choice routinely lie about tax-supported voucher programs.

For example, the People for the American Way says that "voucher schools...often discriminate among applicants on the basis of learning ability, religion, parental involvement and other factors."

This is not true. Voucher programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Florida serve students in low-income families; students with disabilities; and students at underperforming public schools. These programs require random selection lotteries when applications exceed available space. This effectively prohibits selective discrimination among voucher students.

Independent evaluations of the Milwaukee and Cleveland programs contradict opponents' claims of biased selection.

Describing the Milwaukee program, the nation's oldest and largest, Wisconsin's nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau states:

"As intended, [it] appears to be serving children who meet statutory requirements related to low income...In addition, [it] serves pupils whose overall ethnic composition is similar to that of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)....62.4% of Choice pupils were African-American, and 61.4% of MPS pupils were African-American."

Wisconsin's official evaluator of the Milwaukee program finds that:

"[S]tudents...were from very low-income families, considerably below the average [MPS] family and about $500 below the low-income...MPS family....Prior test scores of Choice students [showed they] were achieving considerably less than MPS students and somewhat less than low-income MPS students [when they entered the program]."

Ohio's official evaluator of the Cleveland program says:

"The [Cleveland] program effectively serves the population of families and children for which it was intended and developed. The program was designed to serve low-income students...The majority of children who participate in the program are unlikely to have enrolled in a private school without a scholarship."

Parental School Choice is Widespread — Unless You're Poor

In Florida, the design of its two choice programs inherently contradicts claims of biased selection. One serves only students from public schools listed as "failing" by the state. Another provides vouchers specifically for students with learning disabilities and special education needs.

In contrast to these existing voucher programs, individual public schools routinely use admission standards that reflect student academic ability, special learning needs, and prior behavior. This is documented at www.schoolchoiceinfo.org.

baeo

Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

19,500 ACRES IS A LOT OF OPEN SPACE.

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR STRIDE IS ONLY TWO INCHES LONG.

The Greater Prairie Chicken is one of several species to benefit from the latest conservation effort by Phillips Petroleum. Together with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Phillips will help restore and manage 19,500 acres in northwestern Missouri, making it a safe haven for high-priority birds. Now breeding populations of Greater Prairie Chickens, Henslow's Sparrows and Bobolinks will have an improved chance of survival. And the finished project will become the first of many bird conservation areas to eventually span the country. It's just one more way Phillips works to improve our world and why we're known as The Performance Company.

PHILLIPS PETROLEUM COMPANY

For a copy of our annual report, call 918-661-3700, write to: Phillips Annual Report, B-41, Adams Bldg., Bartlesville, OK 74004, or visit us at www.phillips66.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED